

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC TO HOLD A CONFERENCE WITH NORTHERN STATES POWER ON AN APPARENT
VIOLATION OF REQUIREMENTS AT PRAIRIE ISLAND PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet Tuesday, March 18, with representatives of Northern States Power for a predecisional enforcement conference on an apparent violation of NRC requirements at the Prairie Island Nuclear Station at Red Wing, Minnesota.

The meeting will be at 2:00 p.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room of the NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. The meeting is open to public observation.

Scheduled for discussion is an incident which occurred February 3 inside the containment building while Prairie Island Unit 2 was shut down for a refueling outage. A reactor coolant pump rotor weighing approximately 21 tons was lifted over the reactor and lowered to the refueling floor in preparation for maintenance. At the time of the lift, the containment personnel and maintenance hatches were open, the reactor's vessel head was removed, and the core contained irradiated fuel.

Plant procedures require that all containment openings be closed if loads greater than 2100 pounds are lifted within 15 horizontal feet of an open reactor with activated fuel. However, at the time in question, plant staff failed to refer to the plant's procedure on heavy loads prior to the lift and consequently violated these procedural requirements.

Before returning the rotor to its original location, the plant staff developed a specific procedure for the lift. The utility also has since implemented other corrective measures, including appropriate training in the handling of heavy loads inside the containment building.

The decision to hold an enforcement conference does not mean the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decisions on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a fine, will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later date.

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