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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(July 18, 1997)

NRC TO MEET WITH POWER RESOURCES, INC.
TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference Tuesday, July 22, with officials of Power Resources, Inc., of Denver, Colorado, to discuss apparent violations of NRC requirements at the Highland Uranium Project in Converse County, Wyoming.

The conference will begin at 1 p.m. at NRC Region IV offices in Arlington, Texas. The meeting will be open to the public for observation; NRC officials will be available afterwards for questions.

The conferees will discuss seven apparent violations of NRC requirements stemming from inspections completed March 13. Three of the apparent violations are related to the company's radiation protection program, three involve environmental monitoring and one a failure to submit a financial report.

In the first apparent radiation protection program violation, inspectors found that ventilation equipment for some buildings at the Highland site was not always used, potentially allowing the accumulation of radioactive gasses from the natural uranium being processed. The second apparent violation is a failure to adequately monitor the exposure of workers to airborne radioactivity from the uranium processing. The third is the apparent failure to properly post one portion of the site as an "airborne radiation area."

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Apparent violations in the environmental monitoring program are the failure to establish written procedures for the program, failure to report the results of three water samples in the semiannual effluent reports for 1996, and two semiannual environmental and effluent monitoring reports that contained incomplete and inaccurate information.

Finally, Power Resources failed to submit on time an annual update to the amount of financial assurance estimated to be required to shutdown and decommission the Highland Uranium Project. The company is required by its NRC license to submit this update each year by March 30. The update had not been received by July 3.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final decision that a violation did occur or that enforcement action, such as a monetary fine, will be taken. The purpose is to discuss the apparent violation, its cause and safety significance; to provide Power Resources an opportunity to challenge or correct portions of the NRC inspection report; and for the company to outline its corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made later by senior NRC officials.

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