



NRC NEWS

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NRC PROPOSES \$288,000 FINE AGAINST DOMINION NUCLEAR FOR VIOLATIONS AT MILLSTONE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has cited Dominion Nuclear Connecticut, Inc., for two violations of NRC requirements associated with the loss of two irradiated fuel rods at the Millstone Unit 1 nuclear power plant in Waterford, Conn. The NRC has proposed a \$288,000 civil penalty for one of the violations.

Northeast Nuclear Energy Company (NNECO), the former operator of Millstone Station, informed the NRC in November 2000 that two fuel rods were unaccounted for. The company was conducting a spent fuel pool inventory when it determined the fuel was missing. A subsequent investigation by NNECO concluded that the fuel most likely had been cut into segments and sent to a low-level radioactive waste facility along with other irradiated reactor hardware sometime between March 1985 and December 1992.

The NRC conducted an inspection to review the results of the company's investigation. The special inspection was conducted between October and December of last year. A public meeting to discuss the findings was held in January and the report was issued on February 27. Based on that inspection, the NRC agrees with NNECO's conclusions. The NRC has also concluded that there are adequate controls to account for all of the spent fuel at Millstone, except for the missing rods.

Since Dominion is now the operator of Millstone Station, it is accountable and was offered the opportunity to meet with the NRC staff at a predecisional enforcement conference to discuss the apparent violations. It declined to do so. The company responded in writing and did not contest the violations.

In a letter to Dominion, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said, "Notwithstanding the fact that there was no realistic threat, past or present to the public health and safety, the loss of highly radioactive fuel rods is unprecedented and is a very significant violation."

Dominion was cited for two violations. The first violation, categorized as a Severity Level II, related to inadequately accounting for special nuclear material contained within the spent fuel rods. The second violation involved untimely reporting to the NRC that the licensed material was missing. The second violation is a Severity Level IV violation for which a civil penalty was not assessed.

A base penalty of \$96,000 is considered for a Severity Level II violation. In this case the NRC has decided to triple the base amount because of the “unprecedented nature of the loss of highly radioactive material and to further emphasize the importance of adequate accounting of irradiated fuel at nuclear power reactors,” Miller said.

Because of the radiological controls that are in place at any of the possible locations of the missing fuel, the NRC believes there is no current threat to public health and safety. There was no evidence found by the NRC team to support the possibility of theft or diversion of the rods. The very high radiation level of the material would have made theft difficult, dangerous and highly unlikely.

In reviewing the company’s corrective actions, the NRC noted the investigation into the missing fuel was thorough and complete, the root cause analysis was comprehensive and the physical inspection of the spent fuel pool was comprehensive.

Dominion has 30 days to respond to the notice of violation.

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