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**NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$330,000 IN FINES
AGAINST OCONEE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a total of \$330,000 in civil penalties against Duke Power Company for three violations of NRC requirements at the Oconee nuclear power plant near Seneca, South Carolina.

The first violation involves the failure of the plant staff to have high pressure injection pumps available to operate on Oconee Unit 3 as required by the plant's Technical Specifications. In early May, two of the three Unit 3 high pressure injection pumps experienced low water flow. During a plant shutdown, one of the pumps experienced substantial damage. It was later determined that the HPI system would not have been able to perform its intended safety function. An NRC inspection determined that the low water flow was due in part to level instrumentation problems which resulted in the draining of a storage tank which supplies water to the pumps. In addition, the inspection found that the plant's operators should have recognized the problem earlier, and that the company failed to adequately assess company and industry experience and correct the design problem with the HPI system. A civil penalty of \$220,000 is being proposed for this violation based on (1) the high risk significance of HPI system inoperability; (2) the fact that Duke Power Company had a similar event in the past and had opportunities to identify and correct the problem; and (3) the significant length of time the violation may have existed.

The other two violations relate to a crack and leak detected in late April in a weld on a pipe nozzle which is part of the Unit 2 high pressure injection system. According to the Notice of Violation sent to the company, Duke Power Company failed to promptly identify and correct the crack resulting in an unisolable reactor coolant leak that was clearly preventable, and Duke failed to take corrective action for temperature differences which could lead to cracking in the pipes. A civil penalty of

\$110,000 is being proposed for these two violations resulting in a total of \$330,000 in proposed civil penalties.

The company has 30 days from receipt of the Notice of Violation to either pay the fines or protest their imposition.

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