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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC PROPOSES $55,000 FINE AGAINST INDIAN POINT 3 PLANT OPERATOR FOR VIOLATION INVOLVING EMERGENCY SYSTEM DESIGN CHANGE

A $55,000 fine has been proposed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission against the New York Power Authority (NYPA) for a violation of agency regulations at the utility's Indian Point 3 nuclear power plant. The pressurized-water reactor is located in Buchanan, N.Y., to the north of New York City.

The violation, discussed with NYPA officials at a predecisional enforcement conference on July 24, involves a lack of design control measures for a modification to the plant's emergency diesel generator system, which powers key safety equipment if the facility loses off-site power. Design control measures are used to check on the adequacy of design.

Indian Point 3 has three emergency diesel generators. Last October, during the plant's last refueling outage, NYPA modified two of the diesel generators so that their auxiliary support systems, including room ventilation and fuel oil supply, would automatically be de-energized by a low-voltage condition. As a result, unless operators manually activated them, these support systems would not work following a loss of normal power that would trigger the use of the diesel generators. Without these support systems, the generators could not be relied on to operate as long as necessary.

The violation was identified during a special safety inspection conducted from May 28 through June 12 at the plant. That inspection was performed as a follow-up to a May 28 event in which normal power to one of the electrical systems used to support safety-related plant equipment was lost. The emergency diesel generators were activated, but operators had to restore the support systems because of the design change.

"This failure to remove the undervoltage trip function, and the resultant impact on the (emergency diesel generator) auxiliary support systems, represents a significant concern because two of three (diesel generators) would not have functioned as designed on a loss of offsite power," NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller wrote in a letter to NYPA notifying it of the enforcement action. "Specifically, the (diesel generators) would have failed due to room overheating or loss of fuel oil unless operators recognized the loss of power to the auxiliaries and took appropriate action to

manually restore power."

Mr. Miller pointed out that although operators successfully restored power to auxiliary systems on May 28, "there was no assurance that the degraded condition of the (diesel generators) would have been identified and corrected ... during a more complex event when multiple annunciator alarms are received in the control room that require operator action."

The NRC gave NYPA credit for taking prompt and comprehensive action to correct the problem once it was identified. Those actions included the removal of the undervoltage trip function, a review of the design change package and training to improve the translation of safety requirements into test requirements.

In addition to the $55,000 civil penalty, the NRC also cited, but did not fine, NYPA for a violation for failing to address a degraded valve that supplies cooling to reactor coolant pump components.

NYPA has 30 days to pay the fine or request in writing that all or part of the penalty be withdrawn.

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