

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, DC 20555  
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234  
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

No. 98-78

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(Wednesday, May 20, 1998)

**NRC ORDER TO PECO ENERGY COMPANY  
CONFIRMS AGREEMENT TO COMPLETE FIRE BARRIER CORRECTIVE ACTIONS**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a confirmatory order to the PECO Energy Company confirming the utility's commitment to complete Thermo-Lag fire barrier corrective actions at its Limerick Generating Station, Units 1 and 2, by Spring 1999. The plant is located about 20 miles northwest of Philadelphia, Pa.

In a letter to PECO officials, Sam Collins, Director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, said the order was issued because of concern "that some licensees may not be making adequate progress toward resolving the plant-specific issues, and that some implementation schedules may either be too tenuous or too protracted." Limerick is one of the plants that have completion action scheduled beyond 1997.

Thermo-Lag is a fire barrier material manufactured and supplied by Thermal Science, Inc., of St. Louis, Missouri, and has been used to provide fire-resistance to wiring and equipment at nuclear plants. The NRC staff has been concerned that Thermo-Lag 330-1 fire barrier systems installed by some of its licensees may not provide the intended level of fire protection and that licensees using them may not be meeting regulatory requirements. Between 1992 and 1994, the NRC staff issued letters to all nuclear utilities asking licensees to submit plans and schedules for resolving the issue. All licensees with Thermo-Lag fire barriers have implemented around-the-clock "fire watches," using workers to patrol vital plant areas on a regular basis to watch for signs of fire until corrective actions are completed.

In his letter to PECO officials, Collins noted that NRC staff have been meeting with licensees to review their progress in completing implementation of their fire barrier programs, but have been concerned with slow progress on resolution of the issue at certain plants.

PECO was one of the licensees with which NRC staff has periodically held meetings. At these meetings, the NRC staff reviewed PECO's schedule for Thermo-Lag corrective actions--submitted to the NRC in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997--and concluded they are reasonable. the company formally agreed on April 27 to the terms of the confirmatory order.

Other utilities are expected to receive similar orders in the coming months.

##

