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NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT: RIII-98-52 October 15, 1998 CONTACT: Jan Strasma 630/829-9663 Angela Greenman 630/829-9662 E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$500,000 FINE AGAINST D.C. COOK PLANT FOR MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS OF NRC SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$500,000 fine against Indiana Michigan Electric Company for violations of NRC requirements that led to extensive degradation of safety systems at the D. C. Cook Nuclear Power Station.

The two-unit station is located at Bridgman, Michigan.

The violations were found in five extensive inspections from August of last year through April. These inspections identified violations at D. C. Cook with how plant design requirements were maintained, how problems were corrected, and how plant changes were evaluated for their effect on safety.

Specific violations were also identified with the inspection and maintenance of an important safety system, the ice condenser system, and with the control of debris and other foreign material in the containment that might affect plant safety systems. (The ice condenser system is designed to prevent excessive pressure that might damage the reactor containment during a possible accident.)

In all, the utility was cited for 37 violations.

In notifying the utility of the proposed fine, NRC Acting Regional Administrator James L. Caldwell, said that the breadth and number of the violations, taken in total, resulted in "a lack of reasonable assurance" that principal plant safety systems would function following a possible major reactor accident.

These affected safety systems included the Emergency Core Cooling System (ECCS), which is intended to pump water into the reactor following an accident, and the reactor containment, including the ice condensers. The containment, the structure surrounding each reactor, is designed to prevent any large release of radioactive material from the plant.

Mr. Caldwell added that the amount of the fine "reflects the consideration of the particularly poor licensee performance, the duration of the problems, the impact on the ECCS and containment, and the NRC's concerns regarding the violations." Indiana Michigan Electric shut down both D. C. Cook units in September of last year after an NRC design inspection raised questions about how past plant modifications had been controlled and reviewed. The other violations were identified during subsequent NRC inspections.

The units have remained shut down while the utility performed extensive reviews and modifications of the plant. Inspections and repairs of the ice condensers are still under way.

The plant will not resume operation until deficiencies are corrected. Further NRC inspections will be conducted to assure that problems are corrected and that the facility is ready for restart.

An oversight panel of NRC regional and headquarters staff members is monitoring the utility's corrective actions and performance improvement activities. This panel meets periodically with the utility to review the status of work at the plant. The meetings are open to the public.

The utility has until November 12 to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.

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Note: The letter notifying the utility and the Notice of Violation are available on the NRC's web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/reports.