

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
801 Warrenville Road, Lisle IL 60532-4351

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT: RIII-96-20

May 22, 1996

CONTACT: Jan Strasma 708/829-9663
Angela Dauginas 708/829-9662
E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST DETROIT EDISON CO.
FOR VIOLATION OF NRC REQUIREMENTS AT FERMI 2 NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine against Detroit Edison Co. for a violation of NRC requirements which occurred when equipment cooling water pumps at the Fermi 2 Nuclear Power Plant were disabled by freezing weather in February.

On February 5 a pump which provides cooling water to an emergency diesel generator failed to operate properly during routine testing. The inoperability of the pump was attributed to the freezing weather conditions, but plant personnel did not immediately recognize the possibility that other cooling water systems for plant safety equipment might be affected by the weather.

Plant personnel used air pressure to remove ice blockage from the pump, and the pump was successfully tested later that day.

Testing of other equipment cooling water pumps was not performed until the next day, when a second diesel generator cooling water pump operated erratically during initial testing. This pump's failure was caused by a buildup of ice in the pump; the ice blockage cleared after about 90 seconds, and the pump then operated normally.

In notifying the utility of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator Hubert J. Miller stated that the utility's failure to promptly identify the potential freezing problem for other cooling water pumps could have affected all four emergency diesel generators and other plant safety systems.

He said the fine was proposed because "the nonconservative operating philosophy exhibited during the event resulted in the increased duration of the problem and associated risks." The failure to promptly address the potential of a common mode failure for the equipment cooling pumps "represents particularly poor licensee performance."

Detroit Edison has until June 20 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.