

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC, WISCONSIN ELECTRIC TO MEET TO DISCUSS APPARENT
VIOLATION AT POINT BEACH NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet March 26 for a predecisional enforcement conference with officials from Wisconsin Electric Power Company on an apparent violation of NRC safety requirements at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station.

The apparent violation involves the failure by the utility to promptly evaluate operation of a safety system after alarms warned of the potential for pipe freezing. The plant is located near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The meeting will start at 9 a.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room, NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. It is open to public observation. NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from the news media and other interested observers.

On December 22 of last year, an alarm indicated that a safety-related pipe was near freezing. However, plant staff apparently did not check to see if the safety system was affected until prompted by NRC inspectors on January 5. At that time, the pipe was found to have ice blockage.

This pipe is a recirculation flow path back to a tank from which water is drawn by some of the pumps that would inject cooling water into the reactor during certain accident conditions. One purpose of this flow path is to protect the pumps from damage due to overheating during certain accidents.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a fine, will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later date.