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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC PROPOSES \$80,000 CIVIL PENALTY, BARS TWO FORMER WORKERS
FOR RECORDS FALSIFICATION AT LIMERICK NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed an \$80,000 fine against PECO Energy Company for multiple examples of records falsification at the Limerick nuclear power plant in Limerick, Pa. In tandem with that action, the agency has issued orders prohibiting two of the former workers involved from taking part in NRC-licensed activities for several years.

PECO Energy, which operates the two-reactor plant near Philadelphia, first identified and investigated two incidents in which records were wrongly filled out and reported them to the NRC. Subsequently, the NRC's Office of Investigations conducted two separate investigations and concluded that records required by the NRC to be maintained had in fact been falsified.

In one of the cases, a chemistry technician and a former chemist at the plant, at the direction of a former chemistry manager, deliberately falsified a record of the time a sample was taken from the Reactor Enclosure Cooling Water System.

Plant technical specifications require that, with a radiation monitor inoperable, at least one sample be taken from the system at least once every 24 hours. On February 7, 1996, the sample was taken about one hour and 15 minutes late. However, the record was altered to indicate the sample was taken within the 24-hour period.

Under orders issued by the NRC, the former chemistry manager and chemist have been banned from activities licensed by the agency for five and three years, respectively. Both workers have been dismissed by the company.

The other case involved several occasions between April 3, 1995 and July 29, 1996 on which the records for required fire protection tests were falsified. Specifically, a fire protection technical assistant deliberately failed to properly perform a fire hose visual inspection surveillance test but stated in a document that the test had been carried out. Further, the worker deliberately failed to perform other such tests yet wrongly

filled out the related documents to show that he had done so. Also, the employee failed to enter a specific area necessary to complete a fire suppression water system spray and sprinkler visual inspection, even though he signed documents indicating the task had been successfully completed.

NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller, in a letter to PECO Energy, wrote that not performing required activities, yet documenting on records that the activities were carried out, constitutes a "significant regulatory concern." In addition, Mr. Miller expressed concern as to whether plant staffers were fearful of discussing problems when they occurred.

"The NRC has previously issued documents emphasizing the importance of maintaining complete and accurate records of activities performed, such as in NRC Information Notice 92-30, issued on April 23, 1992, and NRC Generic Letter 93-03, issued on October 20, 1993. Those documents describe similar occurrences at other facilities," Mr. Miller stated.

"While the NRC is clearly concerned with the individuals who engaged in these activities at Limerick, the NRC is also concerned whether the situation involving the Primary Chemistry Manager is evidence that there have been at least pockets at Limerick where staff was fearful of raising problems when they occurred, notwithstanding generally strong corrective action processes at the site."

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

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