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NRC Issues Confirmatory Order to Farley Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a confirmatory order to Southern Nuclear Operating Co.'s Farley nuclear power plant, which has agreed to a series of corrective actions related to the company's failure to ensure that radiation worker training exams for security officers were not compromised. The Farley plant is located near Columbia, Ala., 18 miles south of Dothan.

The order stems from a settlement achieved under the NRC's Alternative Dispute Resolution process, which was initiated at the request of Southern Nuclear to address an apparent violation that occurred in 2010 and 2011. That violation involved a Farley security officer helping other security officers during radiation worker training exams or actually taking the exam for them.

The NRC's ADR process refers to mediation facilitated by a neutral third party with no decision-making authority who assists the NRC and a licensee in reaching an agreement when there are differences regarding an enforcement action.

A mediation session between the NRC staff and Southern Nuclear was held on March 15 and a settlement was reached. A confirmatory order, issued on May 6, outlines the corrective actions and steps Southern Nuclear has agreed to take to address the violation.

Those steps include fleet-wide actions such as evaluating the testing environment and compliance with applicable training procedures at corporate and operating sites, communicating messages throughout the fleet regarding willful misconduct and its incompatibility with safe nuclear construction and operations as well as holding a fleet-wide stand-down to address and discuss integrity and trustworthiness. Southern Nuclear has also committed to conducting an effectiveness review of all actions taken under the confirmatory order, and evaluating and implementing actions to reinforce communications involving willful misconduct, integrity and trustworthiness annually until 2015.

"This demonstrates that the ADR process can work effectively to achieve not only compliance with NRC requirements, but corrective actions that go beyond those the agency may get through the traditional enforcement process," said NRC Region II Regional Administrator Victor McCree. "Those results can be broader and help ensure that similar events do not happen in the future."

The confirmatory order is currently available by contacting the Region II Office of Public Affairs using the information above and will soon be available on the NRC website.