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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC PROPOSES TO FINE PSE&G \$150,000 FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
AT ITS HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed to fine Public Service Electric & Gas Company (PSE&G) \$150,000 for five alleged violations of NRC requirements at its Hope Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Lower Alloways Creek, N.J. PSE&G was cited, but not fined, for a sixth violation.

All the violations were identified during two NRC inspections conducted between February 1 and August 3 and involve lack of planning, corrective action and safety evaluations. Specifically, the inspectors found:

- Before plant start-ups in February 1991 and April 1994 and during a shutdown for refueling between November 1995 and March of this year, the utility failed to plan appropriate surveillance testing following maintenance work on control rod drives and their associated hydraulic operating systems (two violations).
- When informed by a contractor in 1992 that 15 pairs of reactor building backdraft isolation dampers were installed backwards, PSE&G officials failed to correct these non-conforming conditions until February 1996. The dampers seal the ventilation system to prevent the spread of steam in the event of a steam line break.
- After learning in May 1992 that control rod drive speeds were excessive, the utility did not correct that situation until October of that year, and did not address the root cause of the condition until this year.
- In February of this year, PSE&G implemented a design change affecting valves that are part of the service water system, which provides cooling water to the plant's auxiliary equipment. The utility failed to obtain NRC review and approval because this change resulted in an unreviewed safety question.

In a letter to PSE&G, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert Miller said: "These violations represent a significant regulatory concern because they indicate that management did not aggressively assure (1) appropriate planning for the testing of equipment following maintenance, (2) timely identification and correction of problems identified concerning safety related equipment, and (3) appropriate evaluation prior to making changes to the facility."

"While these issues were ultimately corrected in a manner to avoid significant safety consequences," Mr. Miller said, "these actions were completed in response to the NRC's identification of the problems. For these issues that are the subject of these violations, your independent review was neither sufficient nor timely."

The utility was cited for a sixth violation, which involved inappropriate service water throttle valve settings. This violation was found by PSE&G as part of an extensive review of the Service water system in response to the fifth violation. In light of PSE&G's identification and corrective actions, a civil penalty is not proposed for this violation.

PSE&G has 30 days either to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn.
