

May 17, 1984

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The Honorable Richard L. Ottinger, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy Conservation and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed for your information is an announcement that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff today informed the Pacific Gas & Electric Company of a proposed \$50,000 fine against the company for an alleged violation of NRC requirements that occurred during preoperational testing at the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant.

It is planned to mail this information to the news media today, May 17, 1984.

Sincerely,

Carlton Kammerer, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: Rep. Carlos Moorhead

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:
Sen. Simpson/cc: Sen. Hart
Rep. Udall/cc: Rep. Lujan
Rep. Markey/cc: Rep. Marlenee
Sen. Wilson
Sen. Cranston
Rep. Lagomarsino
Rep. Thomas
Rep. Panetta

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**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20555

No. 84-58
Tel. 301/492-7715

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Thursday, May 17, 1984)

**NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST PACIFIC GAS
& ELECTRIC CO. FOR ALLEGED VIOLATION AT DIABLO CANYON**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff today informed the Pacific Gas & Electric Company of a proposed \$50,000 fine against the company for an alleged violation of NRC requirements that occurred on April 6, 1984, during preoperational testing at the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant.

The alleged violation cited by the NRC staff occurred when plant operators disabled two redundant subsystems in the plant's emergency core cooling system for a period of about 15 hours on April 6. Although the reactor had not yet begun operating at the time, it remained in a hot standby condition during the 15-hour period. Under the conditions of the Diablo Canyon operating license, the plant must be brought to a hot shutdown condition within 13 hours when both of the ECCS subsystems are inoperable (Hot standby is when the reactor coolant system temperature is above 350 degrees F but the reactor is not operating; hot shutdown is when the reactor coolant system temperature is between 200 and 350 degrees F.).

In a May 17 letter to PG&E, NRC Regional Administrator John B. Martin said that the incident occurred because plant operating personnel "failed in this instance to exhibit an acceptable degree of awareness of your facility's technical specification requirements." Martin said that the purpose of the fine is to emphasize to the company the need for adequate procedures and to assure that operators are fully aware of regulatory requirements.

The NRC staff briefed the Commissioners on the details of the alleged violation prior to the Commission vote on April 13 to authorize low power testing at the plant. "NRC Region V is fully committed to assuring the safe operation of the Diablo Canyon facility," Martin said. "We will not tolerate poor performance in the operation of the plant and fully intend to take prompt and aggressive enforcement action whenever license conditions are not met. We believe that all license conditions must be fully complied with, regardless of whether the plant is actually operating at the time or not."

C/R Distribution: Chm, Cmr, PE, GC, CA, ACRS, Historian, SECY, Records.

On April 6, during operations to increase the boron concentration in the boron injection tank, plant personnel isolated the inlet and outlet valves to the tank, according to an approved procedure, to prevent an accidental draining of the tank. However, the NRC inspection found that the company failed to fully evaluate the potential consequences of the new procedure, particularly that isolation of the boron injection tank while the plant was in hot standby would constitute a violation of the plant's license conditions.

In the plant's emergency core cooling system, two charging pumps are designed to deliver highly borated water into the reactor coolant system to assure safe shutdown and cooldown of the reactor in the event of a small leak in the reactor coolant system. The pumps take water from a large storage tank and deliver it through the boron injection tank to the reactor coolant system. When the inlet and outlet valves to the BIT tank were closed, the flow path for both subsystems was effectively blocked.

Under NRC's enforcement policy, when the NRC staff proposes a civil penalty, the licensee is given 30 days to either pay the fine or submit a formal protest. If the utility denies the alleged violation, the NRC staff will consider that response before deciding whether to impose, mitigate or withdraw the proposed civil penalty.