

July 6, 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 staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has cited the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company for four alleged violations of technical specifications for operating the company's Susquehanna Steam Electric Station.

It is planned to mail this information to the news media today, July 6, 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. Heinz
Sen. Specter
Rep. Harrison

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

**Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20555**

No. 84-83
Tel. 301/492-7715

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Friday, July 6 1984)

NRC STAFF CITES PP&L FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS IN OPERATING SUSQUEHANNA STEAM ELECTRIC STATION, UNITS 1 & 2; PROPOSES \$75,000 FINE

The staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has cited the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company for four alleged violations of technical specifications for operating the company's Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, Units 1 and 2, located in Luzerne County, near Berwick, Pennsylvania, on the Susquehanna River. The NRC staff proposes to fine the company \$75,000 for one of the alleged violations.

Three of the alleged violations were found by Pennsylvania Power and Light Company and reported to the NRC. The fourth alleged violation was found during an NRC inspection held at Unit 1 between February 21 and 24, 1984.

The alleged violation being assessed a fine occurred at Unit 2 between the afternoon of April 10, 1984 and the early morning of April 11. The violation involved the loading of fuel bundles and the movement of control rods in the reactor core while a system for monitoring the start-up of the nuclear chain reaction in the core was inoperable.

The monitoring system, called Source Range Monitors (SRM), records the increase in the number of subatomic particles called neutrons, and it is used to measure power levels in the core. If the rate of power buildup becomes excessive, the system sends a signal to another system which automatically shuts down the reactor by inserting the control rods into the reactor core. This function of the monitoring system had been bypassed, which is a violation of technical specifications for operating the plant. The reactor could have been shut down manually.

The alleged violations not assessed a fine that occurred at Unit 1 involved:

- failure to collect samples from a gas monitoring system as required by technical specifications for operation. This occurred between November 3 and 5, 1983, and was reported to the NRC by the company;

- failure to check to assure that electrical power was available from an alternate source when a circuit breaker to an auxiliary power supply was not working. This occurred on October 19, 1983 and was also reported to the NRC by the company; and

-- failure to have an emergency coolant injection system operable when pressure in the reactor vessel was above specified pressure. This alleged violation was found during the NRC February inspection.

In a letter informing the company of this proposed enforcement action, Dr. Thomas E. Murley, Regional Administrator, NRC Region I, said, "The NRC is concerned that indication existed in the control room to alert operators that the SRM was bypassed, yet core alterations commenced based on a conclusion that the SRM was operable. The plant control room operator knew that the SRM channel in question was in the bypassed position but apparently did not recognize its significance in relation to technical specification requirements. Further, the indication that the SRM was bypassed existed through two shift turnovers before the SRM was declared inoperable, demonstrating lack of adequate attention and response to control room indications by plant operators and supervision."

In his letter, Murley made reference to a previous NRC fine of PP&L involving similar problems. In April 1983, the company was fined \$60,000 when plant operators did not respond, for approximately 24 hours, to alarms indicating that a standby gas treatment system was inoperable.

Murley said, in the current case, that the base civil penalty for a violation such as this involving an inoperable monitoring system is \$50,000, but that the base amount was increased by 50%, to \$75,000, because of the previous instances of "inadequate attention and response to control room alarms and indications by operators."

"I am concerned about the continuation of these problems at Susquehanna," Murley said, "and I will examine closely your response to this enforcement action and your corrective actions."

The company has 30 days to either pay the fine or to request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn. The company also has 30 days to write to the NRC staff and describe what was done or will be done to assure that these alleged violations do not recur.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been informed of this proposed enforcement action.