



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Region IV

612 E. Lamar Blvd., Suite 400

Arlington, TX 76011-4125

Telephone: (817) 860-8128

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Contact: Victor Dricks: (817) 860-8128

E-Mail: OPA4.Resource@nrc.gov

Lara Uselding: (817) 276-6519

NRC PROPOSES \$24,700 FINE FOR BASIN ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a fine of \$24,700 against the Basin Electric Power Cooperative in connection with an incident in which several workers were exposed to radiation in excess of NRC limits at a coal-fired power plant in Wheatland, Wyo.

Basin Electric has an NRC license authorizing it to use radioactive materials in gauges at the Laramie River Station to measure the flow of coal through chutes located between storage bunkers and pulverizers. The shutters of these gauges were not closed and locked prior to the licensee allowing welders to work around the gauges.

Seventeen workers were exposed to radiation from the gauges between Sept. 7 and 18, 2009. While six received doses in excess of NRC regulatory limits, none of the workers are expected to experience long-term adverse health effects as a result of the exposures.

“Protecting public health and safety is an important part of the NRC’s mission,” NRC Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins said in a letter to the licensee. “Because the event had a substantial potential for the welders to have received higher doses had they worked for longer periods in the vicinity of the nuclear gauges, this violation is of significant concern to the NRC.”

NRC inspectors determined that several factors contributed to the violations of NRC regulations, including failure to close and lock the shutter mechanisms of the nuclear gauges as required, and failure to conspicuously post caution signs in areas where gauges were located. The licensee has taken corrective action to prevent recurrence.

A pre-decisional enforcement conference was held with Basin Electric on July 14, to review the facts and circumstances surrounding the event. The licensee has 30 days to pay the proposed fine or challenge it.

The NRC’s letter, its enclosures and the licensee’s response will be made available to the public through the agency’s electronic reading room at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/html>. Help in accessing these documents is available from the NRC Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209.

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