



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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No. II-06-046

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December 29, 2006

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NRC PROPOSES \$104,000 FINE AGAINST SOUTHERN NUCLEAR FOR VIOLATION AT HATCH NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has cited Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., for a violation of NRC requirements associated with small pieces of irradiated fuel rods that could not be accounted for at the Hatch nuclear power plant near Baxley in south Georgia. The NRC has proposed a \$104,000 civil penalty for the violation.

An NRC inspection completed in August 2006 found that Southern Nuclear was unable to account for about 18 inches of spent fuel fragments in the spent fuel pool at the Hatch plant. Because of extensive radiological and security measures in place, NRC officials said it is highly unlikely that the material is in an uncontrolled location or that it poses any risk to the public. The high radiation level of the material would have made theft or diversion difficult, dangerous and highly unlikely.

NRC officials say Southern Nuclear failed to keep records and implement adequate procedures for tracking the spent fuel segments from November 1981 until the company's records review in 2004 and physical inventory in 2005, and those discrepancies resulted in the violation.

In a letter to the company, NRC Region II Administrator William D. Travers indicated that the agency believed the company had "sufficient opportunity" to identify the issue before it did.

In early December, Southern Nuclear provided a written response accepting the apparent NRC violation, including additional information on corrective actions already taken and planned to prevent recurrence. Based on the August 2006 NRC inspection and the additional information provided, the NRC staff has concluded that Southern Nuclear has taken appropriate corrective actions.

Southern Nuclear has 30 days to either pay the civil penalty or protest its imposition.

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