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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following is a statement from Greta Joy Dicus, Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

I wish to underscore the Commission's support for the actions announced today by the United States Attorney's Office in Hartford, Conn. These actions help to reaffirm the importance of trust and reliability for those who participate in activities regulated by the NRC. The effective cooperation between NRC and the U.S. Attorney's Office is important in helping both agencies to accomplish their missions.

NRC's ability to accomplish its mission of protection of public health and safety, the environment and the common defense and security requires utilization of a continuing oversight program through resident and region based inspectors. The Commission was convinced, prior to allowing the restart of two Millstone nuclear power plants, that the problems in the training program, as well as other operational and management problems, had been addressed and corrected. As noted by Regional Administrator Hubert J. Miller, in his statement (attached) made on behalf of the Commission, this oversight continues for Millstone even as we see improvements in licensee performance. The U.S. Attorney's actions today act as a complement to those activities as we all work to correct past deficiencies in Millstone's performance.

I wish to subscribe to the comments made by Regional Administrator Miller, as appended to this statement.

Statement
by
Hubert J. Miller
Administrator, NRC Region I

Today's action, based on falsification of licensed operator training certifications in 1996, is significant. This type of violation of federal law has serious consequences. Our investigative effort demonstrates the NRC's commitment to work effectively with the United States Attorney's Office to accomplish our mission of protecting public health and safety. We are very proud of our contribution to this investigation. It demonstrates again the tremendous talent which we have in our Office of Investigations.

Trust is fundamental to NRC's oversight program. We perform numerous inspections and monitor day to day plant operations. But because we can only look at a sampling of plant activities and records, it is important that our license-holders provide complete and accurate information. Honesty and integrity are important to ensuring the protection of public health and safety.

The underlying problems that led to today's action led to the NRC issuing a Confirmatory Action Letter to the company in 1997, to address the numerous operator licensing issues. In addition, there were other matters at Millstone, such as the breakdown of a safety conscious work environment, that caused the Commission to issue orders that resulted in the extended shutdown of the Millstone Units pending Northeast's correction of these problems. The NRC undertook one of the most extensive oversight efforts in the agency's history to confirm that these problems had been addressed effectively before restart. Restart was allowed only after the Commission itself reviewed the situation in detail and was convinced the actions taken by the company were effective. In making this decision, the Commission-- which had been briefed periodically on the status of on-going investigations-- determined it could allow restart because comprehensive corrective actions had been taken to address the operator training problems related to the issues under this investigation. Since restart of the two units, we have continued to closely monitor their performance to ensure the progress the company made during the extended shutdown of the two units is sustained and the units are operated safely.

In this case, the company's willingness to cooperate with the government and take responsibility for its actions is a sign of the current management's interest in moving forward in a conscientious manner.