



NRC NEWS

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NRC ORDERS CHANGES AT SAN ONOFRE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has ordered Southern California Edison Co. to make changes after finding that an individual falsified records for five years to show they made hourly fire patrols when they did not do so at the San Onofre nuclear plant near San Clemente, Calif.

The NRC's Confirmatory Order – agreed to by Southern California Edison – requires the company to develop special training for its employees that emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong nuclear safety culture to prevent deliberate misconduct by workers.

The terms of the Confirmatory Order were agreed to following Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), which uses a neutral mediator with no decision-making authority to assist the NRC and its licensees in resolving differences regarding enforcement actions.

The Confirmatory Order also requires the company to expand its corporate ethics training for managers, supervisors and employees; develop special training to prevent deliberate misconduct; conduct an independent safety culture assessment by an independent contractor; and monitor the effectiveness of its corrective action efforts.

“The order contains a comprehensive set of actions designed to improve performance at San Onofre by emphasizing the importance of a strong nuclear safety culture,” said NRC Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. “The NRC has confirmed several instances of willful violations at San Onofre during the past year. The NRC depends on a good faith effort of nuclear power plant workers to follow regulations. Willful violations by workers cannot be tolerated.”

In the latest case, an investigation by the NRC determined that a fire protection specialist provided inaccurate information about hourly fire watch rounds they were supposed to make while working the midnight shift at the plant from April 2001 to December 2006. The missed rounds had low safety significance because of other fire defense measures in place, but the NRC was concerned at the lack of management supervision over fire watches during the midnight shift for five years.

The NRC has also substantiated several other instances of willful violations at SONGS in the past year. A radiographer deliberately failed to adhere to the terms of a radiation work permit; a technician willfully failed to control the work activities of an unqualified technician performing work on safety-related equipment, which rendered a safety system inoperable for a short time; and two willful violations have been documented for security-related matters.

Copies of the confirmatory order are available on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . The NRC also includes significant enforcement actions at: <http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/regulatory/enforcement.html> .

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