



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 08-028

February 11, 2008

NRC PURSUES ENHANCEMENTS OF ITS ALLEGATION AND INSPECTION ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING SECURITY OFFICER ISSUES AT PEACH BOTTOM NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Dale Klein said today agency management has directed the staff to pursue recommended enhancements to its allegation and inspection programs based on a lessons-learned review that followed an agency investigation into reports of inattentive security officers at the Peach Bottom nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania.

“The NRC has no tolerance for sleeping or inattentive security officers,” Klein said. “When these allegations arose, we investigated but did not reach the right outcome. Upon learning the full extent of the problem, we looked at our own system for examining these situations, found areas for improvement and are making changes. This is an ongoing process, and there may be more changes in the future.”

He said the agency’s Executive Director for Operations Luis Reyes has directed a group of senior agency officials to evaluate the recommendations of the lessons-learned review group created in the wake of the Peach Bottom case, and propose appropriate follow-up actions. The officials were given a deadline of two weeks to report back on how changes were being implemented. Senior agency officials told by Reyes to find the most appropriate manner to implement recommendations were Deputy EDO Martin Virgilio, Deputy EDO Bruce Mallett, Nuclear Reactor Regulation Office Director Jim Dyer, and Office of Enforcement Director Cynthia Carpenter.

The lessons-learned review was conducted by a team from the NRC’s Region I. The review team developed recommendations for improvements to allegation procedures, practices and policies, and to the inspection program aimed specifically at enhancing the NRC’s ability to identify conditions of inattentiveness. The recommendations are under management review and focus on:

- Enhancing NRC processes for forwarding allegations to a licensee, evaluating licensee responses and documenting NRC evaluation of the licensee's response;
- Reviewing NRC procedures for communications and interactions with concerned individuals; and

- Improving NRC inspection processes for detecting inattentiveness and inspector awareness of allegations.

The NRC had launched a range of inspections and investigations after video recordings of inattentive security officers in a “ready room” at the plant came to light in September. These actions were taken to determine the extent of the problem, and to ensure prompt and effective corrective action was taken by the plant owner, Exelon, and its security contractor, Wackenhut. The inspections confirmed there had been several occasions on which security officers were inattentive. However, the NRC also determined the plant’s security program was not significantly degraded as a result. Earlier in the year there had been an allegation that guards were sleeping in guard towers at Peach Bottom. Based on the information provided at the time, the NRC was unable to substantiate that information.

Immediately after seeing the video, the NRC reminded all operators of nuclear reactors of the importance of maintaining an alert guard force, conducted surprise overnight spot checks and, at Peach Bottom, conducted additional security inspections. The agency noted that nuclear plant security is based on layers of defensive capabilities and security was not compromised at Peach Bottom, or other plants where sleeping or inattentive guards have occasionally been found.

The EDO’s memorandum and the full report is available through the NRC’s ADAMS electronic document database by entering ML080420580 on this Web page:
<http://adamswebsearch.nrc.gov/dologin.htm>.

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