

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

No. S-99-20

The Other Side of Excellence

by

Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

1999 Annual Awards Ceremony
June 16, 1999

Good afternoon! Together with Commissioner Dicus, Commissioner Diaz, Commissioner McGaffigan, and Commissioner Merrifield, I would like to welcome all of you to this 22nd Annual NRC Awards Ceremony. Sharing the platform with us today are Dr. William Travers, the Executive Director for Operations, Mr. Jesse Funches, our Chief Financial Officer, and Mr. Tony Galante, our Chief Information Officer.

The opportunity to recognize members of the NRC staff for exceptional performance always has qualified as one of the most enjoyable tasks that the Commission gets to perform. In an era of intensive activity and change like the present, this ceremony comes as an even more welcome opportunity. During our All Employees meetings here on the green yesterday, I entitled my remarks "Congratulations for a Job Well Done"—well-deserved praise for the entire body of the NRC staff. Today we get to make our appreciation a bit more concrete, by singling out specific individuals whose contributions, we believe, have been particularly noteworthy.

Because our discussion yesterday included a review of the significant achievements we have compiled over the past several years, I do not intend to provide such a litany today. Instead, I would like for us to consider, just briefly, what I have called the "other side of excellence"—those accomplishments at the NRC that, while essential to our mission, do not always make "the highlight reel." For example, while we have been busy developing a new reactor oversight program that has gotten so much recent press, resident inspectors have been out in the field continuing to implement the current program, day after day, in the best manner they are able. As we have been devising improved methods for streamlining power reactor license renewal or risk-informing our medical regulations, the project managers in NRR and NMSS have continued, licensee by licensee, to provide high quality safety oversight, using existing tools and incorporating new ones as they become available.

In addition to these activities that we view as "central" to the NRC mission, our agency is rounded out by a large number of professions that provide service and support—frequently in ways that get little attention. Yesterday I was impressed by the efficient operation of the White Flint elevators in serving large numbers of staff returning from the All Employees meetings.

Someone at the agency actually manages that contract, just as the support staff in the Office of Administration ensure that meetings of this sort run smoothly—yet they rarely get applause. Accountants keep our financial operations running smoothly, and ensure that periodically we receive our paychecks—one of those practical necessities—many of us would not recognize those individuals if we met them in the cafeteria. Even the lawyers—as much as we enjoy the fine quality of lawyer jokes—make vital daily contributions to the NRC mission—and, in fact, we could not do our jobs without them—yet how often do we stop to appreciate the service they provide.

In short, while we are a highly technical agency with a safety mission that requires an exceptional level of technical oversight, our work is not comprised entirely of pumps, valves, and radiography cameras. We need diplomats, investigators, computer wizards, secretaries, accountants, contract managers, and human resources specialists, just as we need scientists and engineers. Furthermore, to be effective at meeting our goals requires not only that we devise state-of-the-art programs and processes that register on our lists of accomplishments, but also that we carry out those programs, day by day, situation by situation, in the most professional, competent, and conscientious manner within our ability.

The awardees today are representative of the much larger reservoir of excellence that is the entire NRC staff. One side of excellence, certainly, requires innovation and dynamic leadership, which often involves operating in the spotlight. The “other side of excellence,” as I have discussed, requires vigilance, endurance, dedication, and an attention to detail. Ultimately, both must be present if we are to be successful in the long haul. Today I am very proud to have been part, for the past four years, of an organization that has “both sides,” that achieves excellence in every respect. I am proud to have served with you, and it gives me great pleasure to participate in presenting these awards. I salute the men and women we recognize today for meritorious and distinguished service. Congratulations!