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April 7, 2000

Nuclear Regulatory Commissions
Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555

Re: Reportable Occurrence – Violation of Tech Spec 6.1.3.a.1
License R-2, Docket No. 50-005

Dear Sir or Madame:

This 14-day report is being submitted in accordance with Sections 6.5.2 and 6.6.2 of the PSBR Technical Specifications (TS). Initial verbal notification of this reportable occurrence was made to Marvin Mendonca (NRC Headquarters) and Tom Dragoun (Region 1) on March 30, 2000. This telephone notification was confirmed in writing that same day by copies faxed to Mendonca and Dragoun and with mail copy to the Document Control Desk.

TS 6.1.3.a.1 states: "The minimum staffing when the reactor is not secured shall be: 1) A licensed operator present in the control room in accordance with applicable regulations."

Description of Event:

On the morning of March 30, 2000 the duty SRO performed the morning checkout. Following the checkout and its associated log entries the duty SRO reviewed the procedure for an upcoming reactor laboratory and left the control room at approximately 0843 hours. The reactor was shutdown with all rods inserted and there was no work underway involving either core components or experiments in or near the reactor, however, the console key switch was not in the off position and the key was not removed from the lock. Thus the reactor was not secured and there was no other licensed operator present in the control room.

At approximately 0846, another SRO (the RSEC Director) entered the control room and observed the key in the console key switch with no licensed operator present. No licensed operator was present in the control room for a period of less than three minutes. No one else was present during that time and no reactor operations were conducted. There was a third SRO present in the adjoining reactor bay during the event and the control room was within that individual's view so there is positive indication that no unlicensed person entered the control room or had access to the reactor console during the period in question.

Review of the Event:

The RSEC Director interviewed the duty SRO and the third SRO as well as reviewing the console printouts in order to establish the timing and circumstances of the event. Several interviews were held with the responsible SRO in an effort to determine a cause for event. The review of the event found no cause other than a momentary mental lapse on the part of the duty SRO. The individual does not have a history of poor performance or judgement. The responsible individual did not feel there was any pressure to accomplish any actions and could not recall any distracting thoughts or pending activities which would account for this lapse.

TSs and procedures clearly establish the need for a licensed operator to be present in the control room when the reactor is not secured. The TSs as well as procedures also clearly define the requirements for the reactor to be secured. There is also clear procedural guidance as to securing the reactor if operations are not being conducted.

April 7, 2000

There was a related event on February 9, 1998. The same individuals were not involved and the circumstances leading to the event are not similar. This event is not safety significant.

Corrective and Preventative Actions:

The Director held a counseling session with the responsible individual. The individual was also tasked with conducting a "lessons learned" training session for the licensed operators. That session was completed at the next morning status meeting on April 3, 2000. A general staff discussion ensued following that presentation as to how to avoid mental lapses both as individuals and as a team. The event was also discussed with the Penn State Reactor Safeguards Committee on April 4, 2000. No changes in procedures or operational practices were found to be appropriate. The event does highlight the need for continuing efforts to improve attention to detail and to keeping operators focused on their responsibilities as licensed operators.

If you have any questions regarding this event, please call Dr. Sears, the RSEC Director, at 814-865-6351.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eva J. Pell
Interim Vice President for Research
Interim Dean of the Graduate School

EJP:CFS/skr

pc: Dragoun (NRC Region 1)
Mendonca (NRC Headquarters)
Burton (Assoc. Dean, College of Engineering)
Sathianathan (PSRSC Chairman)
Sears (RSEC Director)
Flinchbaugh (RSEC Manager, Operations & Training)

Subscribed to and sworn before me on the 7th day of April, 2000, Notary Public in and for Centre County, Pennsylvania.



NOTARIAL SEAL
SUSAN K. RIPKA, Notary Public
The Pennsylvania State University
Centre County, PA
My Commission Expires May 12, 2003