

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

S-96-16

PRESS CONFERENCE AT WATERFORD

BY

DR. SHIRLEY ANN JACKSON, CHAIRMAN
U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WATERFORD, CONNECTICUT
AUGUST 6, 1996

Good afternoon. I would like to make a few brief points to begin with before turning to your questions. I know we have a lot of ground to cover in the hour ahead. But, of course, you are invited to stay and report on the public meeting which follows this news conference.

I have been Chairman of the NRC for a little more than a year. As you know, the NRC has a five-member Commission which lays out the policy framework, but, as the Chairman, I am the agency spokesperson and its principal executive officer with the responsibility for ensuring that the NRC staff is responsive to Commission policy, and overseeing and directing how it carries out NRC's regulatory program.

I know your primary focus is on the status of our regulatory actions with respect to the Millstone Nuclear Station and with the licensee's performance. As you know, all three Millstone reactors are currently shut down because of safety concerns, and our concerns with respect to the pervasiveness of the licensee's non-conformance with regulatory requirements and the inadequacy of its corrective action programs. In my discussions with the management of Northeast Utilities today, I informed them that, before the Millstone Station reactors can restart, the NRC will require an Independent Corrective Action Verification conducted by an Independent Third Party. The objective is to provide a high level of confidence in the process used by the licensee to identify, review, and correct problems.

The Independent Corrective Action Verification provides for indepth confirmation of results versus plan and process. The proof of improvement will be in the results - not the programs. The NRC will closely monitor verification activities and conduct public meetings, public inspection exits, and allow observance of NRC inspections by representatives for the State of Connecticut. Assuming that Northeast Utilities management appropriately assesses the items it needs to resolve for restart, and aggressively implements their resolution of the items, we do not expect the Independent Corrective Action Verification to materially affect the restart schedule, once it has been agreed upon.

We are taking these measures because of NRC concern about the licensee's management effectiveness in correcting problems, and the magnitude and scope of NRC findings as well as licensee identified deficiencies.

Finally, while our inspections and reviews are ongoing, it is apparent that Northeast Utilities and the NRC did not always function as it should have. We are still in the process of trying to find out why this occurred to make sure that the kind of problems we are finding at Millstone does not recur, at Northeast Utilities or elsewhere.

Let me say that I think this is a fixable problem. It is an issue of management: setting a policy, sticking to it, and making sure it is followed. There is some experience today -- where plants, that were once on NRC's Watch List (such as Brunswick, Turkey Point, and Davis Besse), are now good or superior performers. One of the key factors contributing to their success was that these plants stayed shut down until they corrected their overall equipment problems.

And now I would like to turn to your questions.