Nuclear Reactor Laboratory

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March 27, 20001

US Nuclear Regulatory Commission
ATTN: Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555

Re: License R-74, Docket 50-156

On Tuesday, 27 March 2001, an event reportable to the NRC under Technical Specifications item 6.7 c(4) occurred. The circumstances and subsequent action are indicated below.

Procedure UWNR 001, Standing Operating Instruction, states "A Licensed Operator must be in the Control Room at any time a key is in the key switch". Contrary to this procedure, a licensed operator was not present in the control room for 22 minutes while the key was in the master key switch. This event is an "observed inadequacy in the implementation of administrative or procedural controls" and is thus reportable under Technical Specification 6.7 c(4).

Description of Event:

At 7:01 A.M. CST the reactor supervisor was conducting a training session with a reactor operator trainee on the performance of the daily reactor pre-startup check list. As part of the procedure the reactor console key was placed into the master key switch and the master key switch turned to the ON position. The check list was completed at 7:46 A.M. Since no further reactor operations were immediately planned, the reactor supervisor and trainee left the control room, while inadvertently leaving the key in the master key switch and the master key switch turned to the ON position. At 8:08 A.M. the reactor director entered the control room and observed the key in the master key switch and the master key switch turned to the ON position. The reactor director immediately secured the reactor by turning the key switch to the OFF position, removing the key from the master key switch and retaining possession of the key.

During this period of 22 minutes in which the key was in the master key switch and a licensed operator was not in the control room, the reactor was not secured; however, the reactor was shutdown and the reactor safety system was operable. Also, during this time, the reactor laboratory was unmanned and all security doors were closed and locked.

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Corrective Actions:

Immediate corrective actions were taken upon discovery of the procedural violation. At 8:08 A.M. CST on Tuesday March 27, 2001 the reactor was secured by a licensed operator placing the master key switch to the OFF position, removing the key from the master key switch, and maintaining possession of the key. Followup actions included an immediate oral reprimand to the involved operator.

Standard operating practice is to perform a reactor startup following completion of the daily pre-startup checklist, UWNR 110. In this situation, the key remains in the master key switch after the UWNR 110 is completed while a licensed operator commences the reactor start-up check sheet, UWNR 111. Performance of the UWNR 110 on Tuesday, March 27, 2001, was part of a training exercise and reactor operation was not immediately planned. All licensed operators are aware that unless reactor operations are to commence immediately following completion of the UWNR 110, the key must be removed from the master key switch before leaving the control room. However, no explicit step exists in the UWNR 110 to remove the key from the key switch if reactor operation does not immediately commence. To prevent this event from reoccurring, a procedure change to UWNR 110, Daily Reactor Pre-startup Checklist was prepared for submission to the Reactor Safety Committee for approval at the May 2001 meeting. This change includes a checkoff for turning the master switch off and removing the key if operations do not immediately commence.

Sincerely,

R. J. Cashwell
Reactor Director

cc: Compliance Inspector, Region II, Craig Bassett
Facility Project Manager, Alexander Adams
Reactor Safety Committee, RSC Document 724

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