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June 13, 2001

The Pennsylvania State University
304 Old Main
University Park, PA 16802-1504

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555

Re: Reportable Occurrence: Violation of Tech Spec 6.1.3.a.1)
License No. 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 notifications of the reportable occurrence were made to Marvin Mendonca of the Non-Power Reactors and Decommissioning Project Directorate and to Tom Dragoun, Region 1 on June 7, 2001. The telephone notifications were confirmed in writing the same day by fax to Mendonca and Dragoun with mail copy to the Document Control Desk.

TS 6.1.3.a.1) states: "The minimum staffing level 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 June 7, 2001 at shortly before 8 AM the duty SRO completed the morning reactor checkout. Performing the reactor checkout requires the console key to be inserted in the console key switch in order to reset the console during the multiple activations of scrams and the evacuation alarm during the checkout. After completing the checkout and making appropriate log book entries the duty SRO left the control room to make preparations for beginning the morning operations. Following completion of the checkout he did not remove the console key from the console key switch; thus the reactor was not secured even though all control rods were fully inserted, no work was in progress involving core fuel or structures, and no experiments in or near the reactor were being moved or serviced. Shortly after the duty SRO left the control room another licensed operator entered the control room and observed the key was not removed from the console key switch. This second operator immediately paged the duty SRO and the Director to respond to the control room. Upon the second operator's entry to the control room the violation of TS 6.1.3.a.1) ended. The period of time in which a licensed operator was not present in the control room while the reactor was not secured was determined to be less than 75 seconds.

Review of the Event:

The individuals involved were interviewed by the Director. The checkout procedure, the control room log and the console printouts were reviewed. No extenuating circumstances or detractions were identified. The duty SRO specifically indicated that he did not feel rushed and had just spent several minutes reviewing the results of the checkout to assure that everything was correct. The event is best described as a mental lapse on the part of the duty SRO in that he turned his attention to preparing for the day's operations prior to removing the key at the completion of the checkout. The actions of the duty SRO were reproduced in order to establish the timeline during the period a licensed operator was not present in the control room. As mentioned in the previous paragraph this period of time was determined to be less than 75 seconds. During the time that no licensed operator was present in the control room no other personnel were present nor were any reactor operations being conducted. The event was not safety significant.

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The checkout procedure contains explicit direction that the reactor is to be secured at the end of checkout if not proceeding to reactor operations. The checklist used during the checkout does not contain a specific checkoff for securing the reactor.

This is the third event of this nature in the last several years. The first event occurred on February 9, 1998 and was reported in our 14-day letter dated February 20, 1998. Although a violation of the same TS that event involved different circumstances relating to turnover of responsibilities between licensed operators and does not pertain to this current event. The second event occurred on March 30, 2000 and was reported in our letter dated April 7, 2000. That event is almost identical in the nature and circumstances to the current violation.

In addition to interviews of the personnel involved, multiple discussions were held with facility management and licensed operators in efforts to determine how such mental lapses might be better prevented. As in the March 30, 2000 event we have not identified any changes in procedures which would prevent such an occurrence however we have identified a modification to the procedure checklist and a change to the checkout logbook stamp which we believe will be sufficient to prevent this specific event in the future.

Corrective and Preventative Actions:

The checklist for SOP-2, Reactor Checkout, will be modified to include a specific checkoff line at the end of the checklist addressing whether the reactor has been secured. In addition the checkout logbook stamp will be modified to include a specific notation indicating whether the reactor is secured at the completion of the checkout. Neither of these changes will preclude proceeding directly into operations without securing the reactor but they will provide a reminder to the operator regarding that action.

During the facility status meeting on June 11, 2001, the events of this reportable occurrence were discussed as well as anticipated corrective and preventative actions and input was sought from the staff on other means of preventing such mental lapses in the future. During these discussion the licensed operators were requested to begin implementing these changes even prior to the formal changes in the checklist and the stamp. This implementation began with the checkout on June 11, 2001. The event as well as corrective / preventative measures will be discussed with the Penn State Reactor Safeguards Committee at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

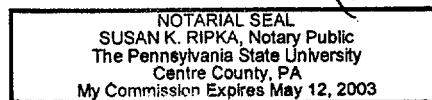
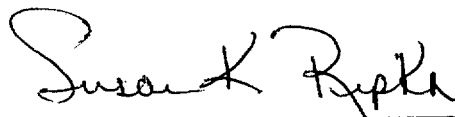
If you have any questions regarding this event, please contact Dr. Sears, the RSEC Director, at 814-865-6351.

Sincerely,



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

Cc: M. Mendonca (NRC Headquarters)
T. Dragoun (NRC Region I)
F. Sears (RSEC Director)
L. Burton (Assoc. Dean)
D. Sathianathan (PSRSC Chairman)



6/13/01