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Questions and Answers - IP2 Special Inspection

Why was a public exit not held for this inspection?

Because other forums have been and will be made available for the public to engage the NRC.

Why can't you issue these as final findings now?

These findings are under review by the NRC management and constitute preliminary conclusions subject to change.

I understand that Con Edison has made several arguments against these findings. Why are these not available to the public? Are there secret negotiations going on?

Con Edison's objections are listed in the Quick Look. The NRC is evaluating the positions taken by Con Edison and has not arrived at any conclusions. The NRC does not negotiate its findings with licensees but considers information supplied by licensees in an attempt to arrive at a conclusion that gives fair weight to all the views expressed.

What does hour-glassing mean?

The inward bulging of a flow slot caused by denting of a tube.

How can you consider allowing Indian Point 2 to startup given the significant management and program problems?

The NRC continues to question Con Edison's programmatic and technical basis for restarting the plant. In addition Indian Point 2 is the focus of increased NRC attention and will be into the near future as part of the revised oversight program.

Aren't you going to keep Indian Point 2 shut down until the issues identified in your inspection are fixed?

Indian Point 2, as part of their technical specification requirements, must satisfy the NRC's concerns before the NRC will grant Indian Point 2 the right to restart.

Why haven't you issued a violation, civil penalty or shut down order?

The NRC is considering the appropriate action to take as it continues to develop the technical basis for the event and assesses the subsequent actions taken by Con Edison. The action taken by the NRC will be based, to a large degree, on the results of the on going "significance determination process" or SDP.

Why does Con Edison say the exact opposite that "they met all requirements?"

The NRC, in Part 50 Appendix B, holds the licensee to a higher standard then simple regulatory compliance by establishing a framework of expected levels of performance. The NRC has preliminarily concluded that Con Edison failed to meet these levels of performance even though they may have complied with lower level requirements.

Why didn't the NRC identify these problems in 1997?

The NRC has limited resources and is only able to sample a portion of any program. In 1997 the NRC inspection was directed toward the broad area of Inservice Inspection a portion of which is the Steam Generator inspection program. The current inspection team took a much closer look at the Steam Generator program using specialists and contractors to delve deeply into the causes of the recent tube leak event.

Why should we have confidence in the NRC's ability to regulate these plants?

The NRC depends, in part, on defense-in-depth in order to assure an appropriate framework of safety barriers exist. The NRC uses its inspection program, license review, and regulatory oversight program, to assure the defense-in-depth is being maintained by a licensee.

Who in the NRC is responsible and being held accountable?

The Commission is responsible for implementing the requirements of the Atomic Energy Act and the Reorganization Act. Any authority exercised by the NRC staff is at the discretion of the Commission.

What have you done to correct problems with NRC effectiveness?

The NRC has assembled a team in order to ascertain the lessons the NRC can learn from this incident. The team will make recommendations that can be considered for implementation as improvements in the NRC process.

What other plants have similar problems with detection of tube flaws?

Although, to varying degrees, other plants may have some form of steam generator degradation the agency is not aware of a plant facing problems similar to those faced by Indian Point 2.

What are you going to do about the steam generator issue?

The NRC continues to work with the Nuclear Energy Institute in developing guidelines that provide a consistent industry approach for managing steam generator programs and for maintaining steam generator tube integrity. (See Secy 00-0078)

What has been done to prevent recurrence of a similar problem at Indian Point 2?

Con Edison has implemented inspection refinements that compensate for the problems encountered in '97 that masked indications. Con Edison has expanded their steam generator inspection program and, as result, have taken a larger population of questionable tubes out of service by plugging.

Con Edison stated that PWSCC was an expected condition and no notice was provided to analysists other than through the normal disposition process.

The NRC has concluded that Con Edison should have taken additional steps upon discovery of a tube with PWSCC. Con Edison should have disposed of the indication with more engineering consideration then used in the normal process. More emphasis on the discovery of PWSCC in the Steam Generator might have lead to the discovery of other examples of the degradation and a better understanding of the Steam Generator's condition before it was returned to service.