



Eva J. Pell
 Vice President for Research
 Dean of the Graduate School
 Steimer Professor of Agricultural Sciences

(814) 863-9580
 Fax (814) 863-9659
 E-mail: ejp@psu.edu

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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.f and 6.6.2.1 of the PSBR Technical Specifications (TS). Telephone notification of this reportable occurrence was made to Marvin Mendonca of the NRC staff on October 30, 2002 at about 1430 hours.

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 October 30, 2002 at approximately 1015 hours the Duty SRO completed the performance of a 200 kW Square Wave. The last step of the Square Wave procedure calls for the reactor to be secured if further operations are not to be performed. Following shutdown of the reactor, insertion of all control rods to their lower limits, and verification that all information required by the Square Wave logbook stamp had been entered, the Duty SRO left the control room to begin preparations for movement of a sample irradiation device to the core face. The console key was not removed from the switch; thus the reactor was not secured even though all control rods were fully inserted, no works was in progress involving core fuel or structures, and no experiments in or near the reactor were being moved or serviced. The Duty SRO was at the pool edge just outside the control room entrance while beginning his preparations. The Duty RO came to the reactor bay to assist the Duty SRO and entered the control room. Upon entering the control room it was observed that the reactor was not secured. Upon the entry of the Duty RO 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 estimated to be about one (1) minute. The Duty RO removed the key, brought the situation to the Duty SRO's attention, handed the key to the Duty SRO, and the Duty SRO notified the Director.

Review of the Event:

The Duty SRO completed an event report. The Director interviewed the Duty SRO and Duty RO. The console logbook and console printouts were reviewed by the Director. No extenuating circumstances or detractions were identified. The Duty SRO specifically indicated that he did not feel rushed and did not feel any time constraints to accomplish the task just completed or the one to be started. Since the Duty SRO had been absent for about a month and a half from operations he had taken special care to review past operations and maintenance logs as well as to pay particular attention to the checkout that he had performed and the performance of the Square Wave. Reference was being made to the operating procedures during both the checkout and the Square Wave. The step in the procedures that directed securing the reactor was not performed.

The Duty SRO was immediately outside the control room during his period of absence from the control room. Based on the interviews, the event report, and the review of the console printouts the period of time during which the control room was not staffed was no more than two minutes and was most likely about one minute. Since no

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operations were being conducted, the rods were fully inserted, and no operation would have been possible without the Duty SRO being aware of such operation the event is not considered to be safety significant.

This is the fourth event of this nature in the last several years. The first event occurred on February 9, 1998 and was documented in our letter of February 20, 1998. This event, although a violation of the same TS, involved different circumstances relating to turnover of responsibilities between licensed operators. The second event occurred on March 30, 2000 with documentation in our letter of April 7, 2000. The third event occurred on June 7, 2001 with documentation submitted on June 13, 2001. These latter two events are similar in nature to the current event.

The review of the latter two events led us to modify our checkout procedure and the logbook stamp for that checkout in an effort to provide ticklers to the console operator to prevent the mental lapses that have led to these violations. The present Square Wave procedure already contains appropriate direction regarding the securing of the reactor.

Corrective and Preventative Actions:

This event was briefed to the staff by an e-mail on the day of the occurrence. It was discussed in detail in the next status meeting on the morning of Monday, November 4th, 2002. The event was briefed to the Penn State Reactor Safeguards Committee by the same e-mail and will be discussed with them at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

No additional changes to procedures or training are contemplated at this time. The interviews from each event have shown that the operators are adequately trained on the procedures and that the procedures contain the appropriate steps and are clear in their direction. The common thread appears to be the operator at the console beginning to consider the next operational task prior to fully completing the operation at hand. This thought process appears to detract the operator's attention to detail from the task of removing the key from the console prior to leaving the control room. The discussion during the status meeting emphasized the need to complete the task at hand prior to beginning the next task. It also emphasized the need for teamwork between the console operator and the other licensed operator on shift to prevent such oversights.

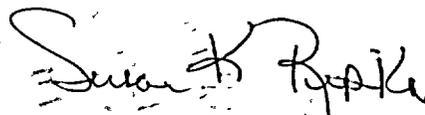
If you have any questions regarding this event, please contact Dr. Sears, the RSEC Director, at 814-865-6351.

Sincerely,



Eva J. Pell, Ph.D.
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)
L. Hochreiter (PSRSC Chairman)



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The Pennsylvania State University
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My Commission Expires May 12, 2003