

March 5, 2003

Mr. David A. Lochbaum
Nuclear Safety Engineer
Union of Concerned Scientists
1707 H Street NW Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006-3962

Dear Mr. Lochbaum:

This letter is in response to your letter, dated January 13, 2003, regarding an exemption that was granted to the Salem Generating Station to extend the completion date for the licensed operator requalification training cycle from October 3, 2002 until January 14, 2003. In your letter you raised several issues regarding the timing of the exemption request and the qualification status of the licensed operators. We understand that you raised these issues on behalf of both the UNPLUG SALEM CAMPAIGN and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The exemption requested by Salem was an administrative program change for the purpose of aligning the start and end dates for the licensed operator requalification training cycles with the Hope Creek requalification training schedule. Prior to issuing the exemption, we determined that Salem completed the 24 month cycle of training and examinations required by their requalification program before October 3, 2002. Thus, the exemption was not intended to address any requirements that were not met.

The exemption approved by the NRC had the effect of extending the current requalification period that ended October 3, 2002 from 24 to 27 months. The licensee ensured that the requirement in Part 55 for continuous requalification training was met by conducting training during the period of extension. In the event that the NRC had disapproved the request, no violation would have occurred because they continued requalification training. Changing the dates for the requalification cycle was considered an administrative program change with no impact on safety. No violation of 10 CFR 55.59 (a) or (c) occurred, no reporting criteria were met and therefore, no report was necessary. Given the administrative nature of the exemption request and the information provided regarding the training of the operators, processing the exemption was straightforward and readily accomplished by the NRC staff within the time frame requested by the licensee.

I trust that this letter has been responsive to your questions. Please contact me if you have any further questions or concerns regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Hubert J. Miller
Regional Administrator

Mr. David A. Lochbaum

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