

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

May 11, 1987

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 87-21: SHUTDOWN ORDER ISSUED BECAUSE LICENSED OPERATORS ASLEEP WHILE ON DUTY

Addressees:

All nuclear power reactor facilities holding an operating license (OL) or a construction permit (CP) and all licensed operators.

Purpose:

The purpose of this information notice is to reaffirm the principle of high standards of control room professionalism and operator attentiveness that are essential to ensure a nuclear power reactor facility is operated safely and in a manner which will protect the health and safety of the public. It is expected that recipients will review the information for applicability to their facilities and consider actions, if appropriate, to preclude a similar problem occurring at their facilities. However, suggestions contained in this notice do not constitute NRC requirements; therefore, no specific action or written response is required.

Description of Circumstances:

On March 24, 1987, the Region 1 office of NRC received information that certain control room operators at the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station had been observed sleeping while on duty in the control room and otherwise being inattentive to their license obligations.

On the basis of initial findings, an NRC order was issued on March 31, 1987, directing the shutdown of Peach Bottom Unit 3 within 36 hours (Unit 2 was already shutdown and in the refueling mode). As indicated in the order, the salient findings to date have established the following:

1. At times during various shifts, particularly during the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift, one or more of the Peach Bottom operations control room staff (including licensed operators, senior licensed operators, and shift supervisors) periodically have slept or been otherwise inattentive to licensed duties while on shift during at least the past 5 months.
2. Management at the Shift Supervisor and Shift Superintendent level either knew and condoned the facts set forth in paragraph 1, above, or as a part of their duties should have known of these facts and taken action to correct the situation.

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3. Plant management above the Shift Superintendent position either knew and condoned the facts set forth in paragraph 1 or should have known the facts and taken action to correct this situation.

The order requires the licensee to provide a detailed and comprehensive plan to ensure full compliance with NRC requirements before requesting the restart authorization of either unit. The order clearly states the NRC position on this issue:

The NRC expects licensees to maintain high standards of control room professionalism. NRC licensed operators in the control rooms at nuclear power plants are responsible for assuring that the facility is operated safely and within the requirements of the facility's license, technical specifications, regulations and orders of the NRC. To be able to carry out these highly important responsibilities, reactor operators must give their full attention to the condition of the plant at all times. Operators must be alert to ensure that the plant is operating safely and must be capable of taking timely action in response to plant conditions. All control room business must be conducted in such a way that neither control room operator attentiveness nor the professional atmosphere will be compromised. Sleeping while on duty in the control room demonstrates a total disregard for performing licensed duties and a lack of appreciation for what those duties entail.

Discussion:

As previously disseminated in IE Circular RI-02, "Performance of NRC-Licensed Individuals While on Duty," conditions and practices that are among those the NRC believes to be necessary for the maintenance of a professional atmosphere in the control room and throughout the facility include the following:

1. All on-duty NRC-licensed operators and operating supervisors must be aware of and responsible for the plant status at all times. This includes supervisors being responsible for the performance of all personnel assigned to their shift who could affect plant safety, regardless of specialty affiliation. Knowledge of the plant's status must be ensured during shift changes by a formal watch turnover and relief.
2. All on-duty NRC-licensed operators must be alert, remain within their immediate areas of responsibility until properly relieved, and be particularly attentive to the instrumentation and controls located within these areas at all times.
3. Potentially distracting activities in the control room and other watch stations must be prohibited (for example: use of radios, TV, alcohol or drugs, games, horseplay, hobbies, and reading that is not directly job related).
4. Control room access must be limited to those persons on official business only and loitering in this area must be prohibited.

5. All necessary plant-related technical/administrative control room business must be conducted at a location and in such a manner that neither licensed control room operator attentiveness nor the professional atmosphere will be compromised. This includes activities associated with the use of special eating and training facilities for on-shift personnel.

IE Information Notice 85-53, "Performance of NRC-Licensed Individuals While on Duty," recently reemphasized these points.

It is recommended that each power reactor licensee review the content of this notice with its licensed operators and other plant staff as appropriate. Administrative procedures that provide guidance to licensed operators regarding acceptable performance and behavior should also be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure clear direction is provided in the area of shift supervisory personnel duties and responsibilities, including operator attentiveness while at the controls of a power reactor.

It is also recommended that the information contained in this notice be widely disseminated to licensed personnel by management at a level that will convey the very high degree of importance the NRC staff places on this aspect of reactor operations.

No specific action or written response is required by this information notice. If there are any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Regional Administrator of the appropriate NRC regional office or this office.

Charles E. Rossi

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Attachment: List of Recently Issued NRC Information Notices

Attachment 1
IN N7-71
May 11, 1987

LIST OF RECENTLY ISSUED
INFORMATION NOTICES 1987

NUREG Information No.	Subject	Date of Issuance	Issued to
N7-90	Hydrogen Leak in Auxiliary Building	4/20/87	All nuclear power facilities holding an OL or CP
AR-10A Sup. 1	Degradation of Reactor Coolant System Pressure Boundary Resulting from Nitric Acid Corrosion	4/20/87	All BWR facilities holding an OL or CP
88-84 Sup. 1	Deficiencies in Upgrade Programs for Plant Emergency Operating Procedures	4/20/87	All nuclear power facilities holding a CP or OL
AR-61 Sup. 1	Misadministrations to Patients Undergoing Thyroid Scans	4/15/87	All licensees authorized to use byproduct material
N7-19	Perforation and Cracking of Rod Cluster Control Assemblies	4/9/87	All Westinghouse power PWR facilities holding an OL or CP
N7-18	Unauthorized Service on Teletherapy Units by Non-licensed Maintenance Personnel	4/8/87	All NRC licensees authorized to use radioactive material in teletherapy units
N7-17	Response Time of Scram Instrument Volume Level Detectors	4/7/87	All GE BWR facilities holding an OL or CP
N7-16	Degradation of Static "A" Ring Pressure Switches	4/7/87	All LWR facilities holding an OL or CP
N7-15	Compliance with the Posting Requirements of Subsection 117b of the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, as Amended	3/25/87	All power reactor facilities holding a CP and all firms supplying components or services to such facilities

OL - Operating License
CP - Construction Permit

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