

12/24/03
RTDB received [signature]

From: Art Hanson <hansona@lcc.edu>
To: <nrcprep@nrc.gov>
Date: Mon, Dec 22, 2003 10:54 PM
Subject: I am strongly opposed to any easing of fire protection regulations in the nuclear industry.

Dear NRC Chief of the Rules and Directives Branch:

In 1975, a fire caused by a candle swept through the Browns Ferry nuclear plant in Alabama, burning critical electrical cables and nearly causing a meltdown. In response to that event, the NRC required that utilities establish fire barriers to protect electrical cables running from the control room to reactor safety systems from fire. But in the early 1990s, NIRS revealed that the most commonly-used fire barrier, Thermo-Lag, repeatedly failed independent tests of its effectiveness, and later in the decade, the NRC required utilities to remove their Thermo-Lag and establish new fire barrier systems.

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To date, however, those systems are not in place at most reactors, and the utilities are relying instead on "operator actions", or plant workers manually operating the once-automated equipment by throwing a switch, pulling a circuit breaker, or turning a valve to shutdown the reactor in the event of fire - returning us to the pre-Browns Ferry days. To make matters worse, the NRC has now issued proposed new rules allowing this approach.

I am strongly opposed to any easing of fire protection regulations in the nuclear industry.

Sincerely,
Art Hanson
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Template = ADM-013

F-RIDS = ADM-03
add = R. Dullay (RFB)
R. Yellucci (RH17)