

Response to Questionnaire  
Bob Meyer

1. The NRC is considering allowing simulators that meet certain performance criteria to be used as a substitute for actual plant reactivity manipulations required for an initial operator license. Would you favor having the simulator substitute for actual plant reactivity manipulations for initial license candidates?

- 64% of the respondents were in favor of substituting simulator reactivity changes for actual plant reactivity changes to demonstrate competency.

**Comment:**

Several mentioned that there should actually be a minimum required actual plant manipulation. Those who were opposed expressed a strong opinion that an operator must have actual plant experience prior to issuing a license.

2. Congress is looking at placing a restriction on the number of hours an operator is allowed to work. What type of hour restrictions would you be in favor of?

- 50% wanted some type of change, less than what it is now but greater than 50 hours per week
- 22% wanted the hour guidelines to remain the same
- 16% indicated that 60 hours a week should be the maximum
- 6% indicated to leave the guidelines the same but not allow for any exceptions
- 6% indicated that they wanted less than 50 hours per week

3. The time it takes to license operators is anywhere from 1 to 5 years depending on the “operator pipeline.” When would be a reasonable implementation date for any new work hour restriction?

- 24% of the respondents wanted a change of hour guidelines take effect in 2 years or less
- 6% indicated between 3 and 5 years
- 9% want the change immediately, now or ASAP

**Comment:**

The other responses varied from “when staffing permits” to “up to a variable implementation date depending on how much the requirements change.”

4. Has the operator/shift management workload (administrative or otherwise) increased to the point where maintaining the oversight of plant parameters and the overall big picture view of shift activities has become more difficult?

- 57% indicated that the workload has increased to the point where maintaining oversight of the plant has become more difficult

**Comment:**

One comment was that the Shift Manager’s work load is back up to the pre-TMI days.

5. How would you suggest reducing stress on shift? What are the top three contributors to stress?

- 16% cited poor management practices as contributing most to operator stress. This included (but not limited to) poor planning, unclear expectations, micro-management, poor management ethics and ineffective change management.
- 11% of identified areas contributing to stress were from NOT enough manpower.
- 11% indicated training, requal and constant evaluations
- 9% cited overtime
- 9% cited shift rotation
- 5% cited NRC/INPO rules and INPO practices

**Comment:**

Other small-percentage causes listed were; NOT enough relief from control room duties, more or scheduled breaks, consequences of a mistake, ZERO errors, bad procedures, operator workarounds other operators knowledge.

6. How many hours of overtime do operators/shift management work on an average, per year? Is there excessive overtime?

- 18% indicated 200 hours or less
- 14% indicated 200 – 300 hours
- 12% indicated 400 – 600 hours
- 20% indicated 400 - 600 hours
- 15% worked > 600 hours, up to 1000 hours
- 57% responded there was excessive overtime
- 36% stated that there was NOT excessive overtime

**Comment:**

Remember that if a 12-hour shift is worked, the individual may have up to 187 days off a year, not including vacation or holidays. Working an 8-hour shift, the individual may have only 100 days off. Vacation time is often not factored into department base-loading staffing levels. With an aging workforce it is not uncommon for individuals to carry 30 days off and higher if carrying days over is allowed

7. The number of initial license exams has gone up every year for the past couple of years. Next year about 650 to 700 NRC License Exams will be given. What do you attribute this to?

- 20% indicated that there was an increase demand for the expertise of a Licensed Operator
- 15% attributed this to attrition
- 13% attributed this to an aging work force
- 10% attributed this to an increase demand for “getting your ticket punched” or vanity licenses
- 6% indicated maintaining a license is much more difficult and requal is tougher
- 4% attributed this to shift work and overtime.

8. Please list any other concerns or comments.

- These are a compilation of the comments and concerns. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this effort by filling out your questionnaire.
  - PROS needs a web site.
  - Haven't seen questionnaires like this before.
  - I believe the most important factor for safe and efficient operation is simple processes.
  - I would like to see some focus on this issue by INPO.
  - Downsizing plants are forced to do much more with much less.
  - No longer sure they are being operated safely.
  - Deregulation - how safe is my job? Will my plant close?
  - I believe relaxing NRC oversight is a bad idea.
  - Not allowing an operator to move up through shift supervisor and then on into higher management areas.
  - Cost cutting can lead to decreased safety.
  - Budget/staff cuts w/deregulation as an excuse.
  - Operator pay is too low.
  - I again suggest that you advertise in the communicator for a member who would be interested in setting up and maintaining a PROS Website. Someone may want the practical experience and chance to learn how to do it.
  - PROS has turned in to nothing but another arm of the NRC. It is no longer a voice of the operator in the trenches.
  - Thanks for your continuing efforts to improve things.
  - Everything that happens seems to result in a program.
  - The SRO Certification Program was discontinued at .....
  - I wrote better static & written test scores than most of the active licensed personnel in operations
  - Mgmt persons' lack of foresight or understanding how to keep personnel current of changes.
  - Concern of workforce aging and loss of experience.
  - Lack of exempt employee overtime pay.