

Salem & Hope Creek Work Environment Letter Q's and A's

(Information that may be discussed with the public and media.)

1. Why did the NRC issue a letter to Salem and Hope Creek on its work environment? What is the NRC doing to assess the work environment at Salem and Hope Creek?

The NRC is issuing the letter because of information received in various allegations and inspections over the past few years raised some concerns about work environment.

Because of the number and nature of these concerns, in late 2003 the NRC initiated a special review of the work environment for raising and addressing safety issues. This review has included numerous in-depth interviews of several dozen former and current Salem/Hope Creek employees at various levels of the organization. We also are continuing to review and assess previous events and inspection findings to evaluate how any new information obtained through interviews impacts our previous assessment of these issues.

We have found no serious safety violations and have not concluded there has been a breakdown in the work environment. We are providing information at this time to enable the company to address potential issues before they become serious and impact plant safety.

2. What is meant by work environment?

Workers who raise safety concerns contribute to the larger objective of safety. Establishing and maintaining an environment that promotes the continued raising of safety concerns without fear of reprisal (i.e., a SCWE) is imperative and protected by regulation. Implicit in this is that an individual can raise issues that may involve disagreements or differing perspectives on plant operating decisions particularly as they might impact on continuing plant operation and outage schedules.

3. Why was the letter issued in January 2004 before the NRC review was finalized?

While our work environment review has been ongoing since late in 2003, we have accumulated information about a number of events which, to varying degrees, call into question the openness of management to concerns and alternative views, strength of communications, and effectiveness of station corrective action and feedback processes. Our ongoing review is not yet complete, but we felt that it was appropriate to share this information with PSEG management now in a proactive way to allow them to perform their own assessment and to enable them to address potential issues before the issues become serious and impact on plant safety.

4. Are the work environment issues at Salem and Hope Creek similar to those at Davis-Besse? Will Salem and Hope Creek be shutdown?

The situation at Salem and Hope Creek is different from Davis-Besse. Our assessments at Salem and Hope Creek have shown that the plants have been operated with good safety margin and that PSEG has some weaknesses in their efforts to identify, evaluate, and correct problems and issues.

Regardless of the similarity or differences, the NRC, as a part of its ongoing assessment processes, monitors the safety performance at all of the power reactors it regulates. These ongoing assessments do include reviews of the work environment and if sufficient concern is raised through the allegations and/or inspections, the NRC may take whatever additional action it deems appropriate. Because of the number and nature of concerns raised at Salem and Hope Creek, we initiated a review of the work environment.

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We have not identified any serious safety violations to this point, and we have no basis to either request or order a shutdown of Salem or Hope Creek. If serious safety violations are detected, then the NRC will take whatever action is deemed appropriate.

5. How does the letter fit within the ROP?

The letter does not affect the action matrix, but the ROP recognizes that regulatory actions can be taken separately in this area.

SCWE is one of three main cross cutting areas. The current policy for addressing SCWE issues is derived from a number of NRC Commission papers that were issued from 1996 to 1998. Because of the potential wide variability in circumstances, the Commission chose not to provide a prescriptive policy, but instead chose to recommend that the staff address these circumstances on a case-by-case basis. The letter issued by NRC Region I is consistent with this approach.

6. What are the likely followup actions?

What are the steps after 3/18/04 meeting?

The letter requests that PSEG perform their own in-depth assessment of the work environment at Salem and Hope Creek. It also acknowledges that PSEG has performed some surveys of the safety culture to begin to address this issue. We also asked them to provide their plan of action within 30 days of the date of the letter. We will also conduct a meeting to better understand the details of their plan later.

7. Is the NRC investigating activities at Salem and Hope Creek?

It is NRC policy to neither confirm nor deny any ongoing investigation.

8. What is PSEG's plan to address the work environment issues at Salem and Hope Creek?

PSEG has formed a Corporate Independent Assessment Team to guide their major recovery effort. This team is conducting interviews with employees at various levels of the organization. It is also reviewing the December 2003 Synergy Survey data and plant events and issues in the recent past. In parallel, an independent safety culture assessment was performed by Utilities Service Alliance (USA) Assessment in early March with the results to follow within about a month.

9. We have heard that the Synergy survey results reflected problems with the SCWE at Salem and Hope Creek. Will the survey results be made public and what is PSEG doing about the results?

PSEG has no plans to make the survey results public. The NRC has had an opportunity to review them and has noted general consistency between the Synergy results and preliminary NRC finding and conclusions.

PSEG has divided the Synergy Results Review into four phases:

Phase 1 - Seven employee teams were formed to review survey data and develop priorities. Three teams of volunteers met in early March, and the other four subsequently met offsite for two days to review the data and develop their recommendations.

Are we going to respond on the clock to the press?

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Phase 2 - A second team will evaluate the recommendations from Phase 1 and develop the site priorities and action plans.

Phase 3 - PSEG will implement the developed action plans. Depending on the issues and actions, corrective actions could be implemented immediately or over time.

Phase 4 - PSEG will reassess their organization to ensure changes were made to improve. This may be done through another complete Synergy Survey either in December 2004 or First Quarter 2005.