

Salem Allegation Q's and A's

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

1. ***We have heard that there is an allegation where production pressures took precedence over nuclear safety at Salem and Hope Creek resulting in an environment where personnel at the station do not feel free to raise nuclear safety concerns?***

NRC policy is not to comment on whether an allegation exists or to reveal any details about an allegation that could reveal an alleged's identity.

The NRC has regulations that prohibit a licensee from taking discriminatory actions against an individual for raising nuclear safety concerns. Our desire is for licensee management to create and maintain an environment where individuals feel free to raise safety concerns to management without fear of retribution. We characterize this environment as a Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE), and it is a major cross cutting element of the reactor oversight program. The NRC encourages a healthy SCWE at all facilities and takes action when discriminatory actions have occurred.

2. ***What is the NRC's assessment of performance at Salem and Hope Creek?***

The plants are being operated safely with significant margins of safety. However, the NRC has noted inconsistencies in performance at Salem and Hope Creek for some time. As a result, we have provided heightened attention to site activities, including a much higher than a normal amount of inspection. In our last annual and mid-cycle assessments of overall site performance, we have identified substantive cross-cutting issues in problem identification and resolution at both Salem and Hope Creek. This means that due to weaknesses noted in PSEG's identification and effective resolution of problems, and the NRC will focus more closely on these areas.

3. ***What is NRC's oversight at Salem and Hope Creek?***

Overall, we have a high level of oversight at the facilities, as evidenced by high inspection expenditures at Salem. We have maintained four full-time resident inspectors, treating the plants as two sites even though PSEG had previously merged operations for Salem and Hope Creek. We have performed in-depth special inspections of several issues on-site in 2002 and 2003. So far this year, NRC inspection resources expended at Salem have been more than any of the other 15 operating sites in Region I. Additionally, senior Region I managers have made a number of extensive site reviews over the past year involving direct interaction with senior site and plant management.

Within the NRC's Reactor Oversight Program, Salem Unit 1 is within the Regulatory Response Column of the Action Matrix, based on a diesel generator failure in September 2002, while Unit 2 and Hope Creek remain in the Licensee Response Column.

4. ***Can the NRC shut down Salem and Hope Creek if you like?***

NRC has regulatory authority to order licensees to shut down reactors if the situation merits such action. Our inspection activities indicate that the plants are safe. Although we have identified some performance issues for the company to address, inspection of events and day-to-day activities over the last 12 months has shown that the proper actions have been taken to assure reactor safety and that an acceptable margin of safety exists.

5. ***I heard that a lawsuit was filed in which an individual was fired for raising safety concerns at the facility. Is this true? If so, what is the NRC doing about it?***

We are aware that recently a civil lawsuit was filed in New Jersey, which claims that the affected person was discriminated against for raising safety concerns at Salem and Hope Creek. NRC is aware of the lawsuit and is reviewing the specifics in light of the regulations prohibiting a licensee from taking discriminatory actions against an individual for raising nuclear safety concerns.

6. ***I heard that NRC investigators are working on the same case that the lawsuit against PSEG addresses. Can you confirm that for us?***

NRC policy is not to comment on whether an investigation exists or to reveal any details or status about any investigation.

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