



Office of the Inspector General

Inspections

CONCERNS RESOLUTION PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

During 1986, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) asked this office to review periodically TVA's Concerns Resolution program. This report summarizes the results of our review at each of TVA's nuclear sites and the TVA nuclear offices in Chattanooga.

We reviewed program files and interviewed program officials from TVA's Concerns Resolution Staff (CRS) and from the TVA contractors' Employee Concerns Programs (ECP). We also interviewed 15 percent of the TVA employees and contractors located at TVA nuclear sites or assigned to TVA nuclear Chattanooga offices. Each interviewee was also given an anonymous feedback form and encouraged to add any additional information they wanted about TVA nuclear safety and quality issues or about the survey process.

We completed our field work in July and our briefing of TVA site managers during August 1994.

RESULTS OVERVIEW

Personnel at every site overwhelmingly felt free to raise nuclear safety concerns to their management. We also found the overwhelming majority of CRS and ECP files were handled effectively, and that most employees and contractors know about and would use the CRS or ECP if the need arose. We believe this evidence, taken collectively, indicates the program is operating effectively. However, after completing our fieldwork, a program weakness was found at Watts Bar Nuclear Plant regarding the exit interview process. While we did not perform comprehensive testing of the exit interview process, the OIG investigative operations is currently reviewing the specific circumstances. TVA nuclear management is currently taking actions to resolve this weakness.

The anonymous survey responses indicated overwhelmingly that the interviewees were comfortable with the interview process, understood their interviews were confidential, and felt free to discuss the issues that were the focus of this review.

Additionally, survey participants gave us five technical queries relative to plant safety which we passed on to the CRS and two issues which we passed to Office of the Inspector General Investigations.

THE PROGRAM FILES

CRS--Based on the evidence in the files, the CRS follows its own program directives. We reviewed 76 TVA employee files that were closed during 1993 and 34 pending files.

In general, CRS met its program objectives. Based on the evidence in the files, the CRS follows its own program directives, sponsors a program to receive and investigate nuclear safety and quality issues in confidence, coordinates with management to get technical issues resolved, and responds to the concerned individuals about investigation outcomes and corrective actions.

We did, however, identify a few areas for improvement. These areas include the following.

1. We found two files that should have been closed sooner than they were.
2. We found one file where CRS should have more aggressively sought assistance from a source that was more independent of the affected plant's management.
3. We found one file where the concerned individual was displeased with CRS for going to the individual's management to resolve a management/personnel concern.

CONTRACTOR--Based on the evidence in the files, the ECP follows its own program directives. In our review of the contractors' ECP files, we looked for the same kinds of evidence we looked for in the CRS files. We reviewed 82 files closed during 1993 and 13 files that were pending.

In general, the ECP met their objectives. Based on the evidence in the files, the program managers follow their own program directives, sponsor avenues to receive and investigate nuclear safety and quality issues in confidence, coordinate with management to get technical issues resolved, and respond to the concerned individuals about investigation outcomes and corrective actions.

We did, however, identify some areas for improvement. These areas include the following.

1. We identified topics in several files that were possibly beyond the scope of the ECP and did not involve safety-related issues.
2. Some ECP managers have additional titles and responsibilities. (Each was an ECP manager for a contractor's program with a head count less than 300 people.) Some of the additional responsibilities include quality control, quality assurance, human resources, and project management for their company. Such managers may make or participate in decisions affecting hiring, firing, payroll, and performance reviews. When the ECP manager has such significant personnel or management authorities, some contractor employees may be inhibited from raising safety concerns. Similarly, when the ECP manager is also responsible for quality control, some contractor employees may fear that nuclear safety questions could be perceived as criticism of the quality control manager's work. Because of such complications, extra care should be taken to assure the necessary independence between roles is exhibited to the work force.
3. We found that one ECP program puts copies of concerns in the ECP file and in one other management file. Sensitive information about concerns should be confined to ECP files only.

SURVEY RESULTS

We interviewed 904 TVA employees and 856 TVA contractors.

The overwhelming majority of employees and contractors felt free to report nuclear safety or quality problems.

- 99 percent of the TVA employees and 99.6 percent of the contractors would report a problem through some avenue.
- 99 percent of the TVA employees and 99 percent of the contractors would report to their immediate supervisor, if needed.

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- 92 percent of the TVA employees would report to their concerns program, if needed. Only 3.4 percent cited a negative reason for their unwillingness to go to CRS.
- 91 percent of the TVA contractors would report to their concerns program, if needed. Only 4.7 percent cited a negative reason as the basis for their unwillingness to go to ECP. 96 percent of the contractors would report to TVA's CRS, if needed.

The employee's and the contractor's immediate supervisor was the most frequently mentioned avenue for reporting concerns.

- 90 percent of the TVA employees and 91 percent of the contractors would report a problem to their immediate supervisor first. Only 0.2 percent of the TVA employees and 1 percent of the contractors would report to the NRC first.
- 95 percent of the TVA employees and 94 percent of the contractors included their immediate supervisor among their first three avenues for reporting a problem.
- 307 TVA employees said they had reported nuclear safety or quality problems to their supervisor. Of these, 97 percent said they would do so again. Of the 151 contractors who had reported problems to their supervisor, 95 percent said they would do so again.

The majority of employees and contractors knew about and had a general understanding of the purpose of CRS and ECP.

- 98 percent of the TVA employees knew about CRS. 96 percent of the contractors knew about their ECP. 90 percent of the contractors also knew about TVA's CRS.
- According to 40 percent of the TVA employees, the primary purpose of CRS is "an alternate path to management," while 17 percent said its primary purpose is "dealing with nuclear safety issues."

- According to 23 percent of the contractors, the primary purpose of ECP is "an alternate path to management," while 31 percent said its primary purpose is "dealing with nuclear safety issues."

The majority of employees and contractors felt free to raise intimidation and harassment issues with CRS or ECP.

- 85 percent of the TVA employees said they feel free to report intimidation and harassment (I&H) issues to CRS. Six percent cited a negative reason for their unwillingness to report an I&H issue to CRS.
- 90 percent of the contractors said they feel free to report I&H issues to ECP. Seven percent cited a negative reason for their unwillingness to report such issues to ECP.

The majority of employees and contractors believe their site is resolving problems well.

- 86 percent of the TVA employees and 87 percent of the contractors said they believe problems are being resolved well at their site.

**PROGRAM
STRENGTHS AND
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR
IMPROVEMENT**

**Chattanooga/Bellefonte Nuclear Plant (BLN)--
Strengths--**The BLN employees and contractors, overall, have a positive relationship with their supervisors.

*Opportunities for Improvement at Chattanooga--*An opportunity exists to find ways to increase trust and confidence among the relatively small percentage of employees who do not feel free to report I&H issues to CRS for adverse reasons

*Opportunities for Improvement at BLN--*An opportunity exists to ensure that files are closed in a more timely manner.

Sequoyah Nuclear Plant (SQN)--Strengths--The database SQN CRS uses is very useful for tracking and recording its various encounters. Also, the number of pending files at SQN is very low, which is consistent with an effort to resolve issues expeditiously. Additionally,

the contractors at SQN, overall, are very willing to report a problem.

Opportunities for Improvement--An opportunity exists to ensure that the contractors' ECP programs exhibit the necessary independence from contractor management.

Watts Bar Nuclear Plant (WBN)--Strengths--The files WBN CRS compiles are well documented, orderly, and complete, as is the correspondence within the files.

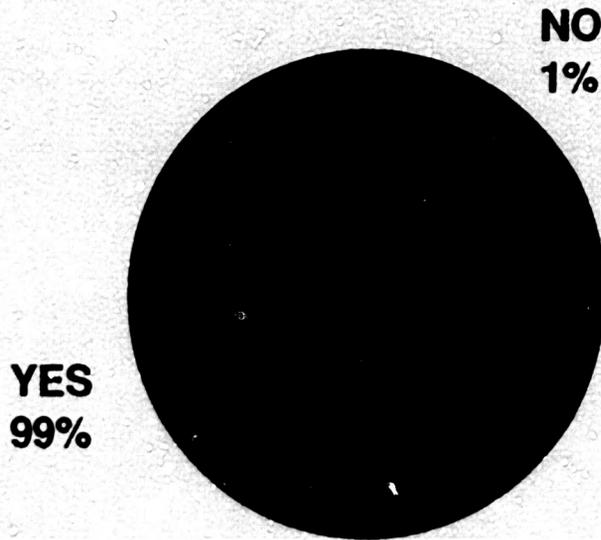
Opportunities for Improvement--Opportunities exist (1) for CRS to make certain that safety questions are reviewed by someone with sufficient independence from the affected plant management; (2) to ensure that the contractors' ECP programs exhibit the necessary independence from contractor management; and (3) to find ways to increase trust and confidence among the relatively small percentage of contractors who do not feel free to report I&H issues to ECP for adverse reasons.

Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant (BFN)--Strengths--The BFN employees are receptive to dealing with problems through the chain of command.

Opportunities for Improvement--Opportunities exist to ensure that the contractors' ECP programs exhibit the necessary independence from contractor management. Additionally, opportunities exist to find ways to increase trust and confidence among the relatively small percentage of contractors who do not feel free to report I&H issues to ECP for adverse reasons.

TVA EMPLOYEES

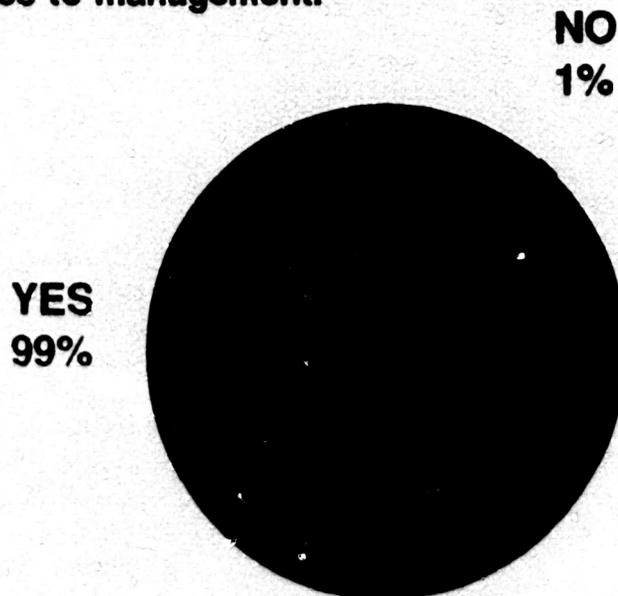
Do TVA employees feel free to raise nuclear safety issues to management.



N = 904 Interviewees

TVA CONTRACTORS

Do TVA contractors feel free to raise nuclear safety issues to management.

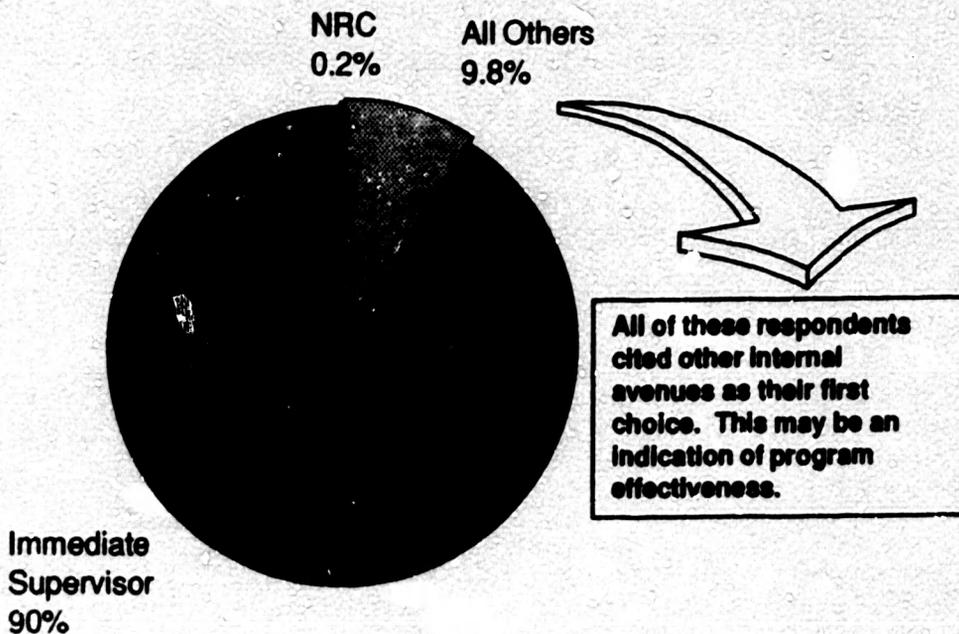


N = 856 Interviewees

TVA EMPLOYEES

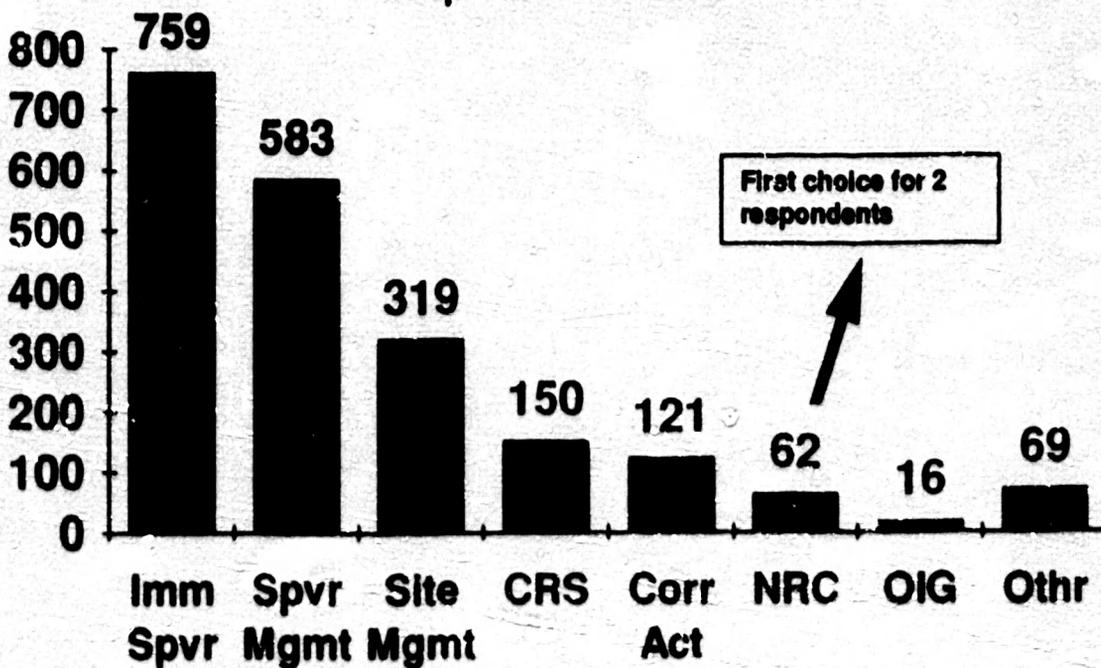
To whom would you report a concern?

First Choice



N = 896 Interviewees

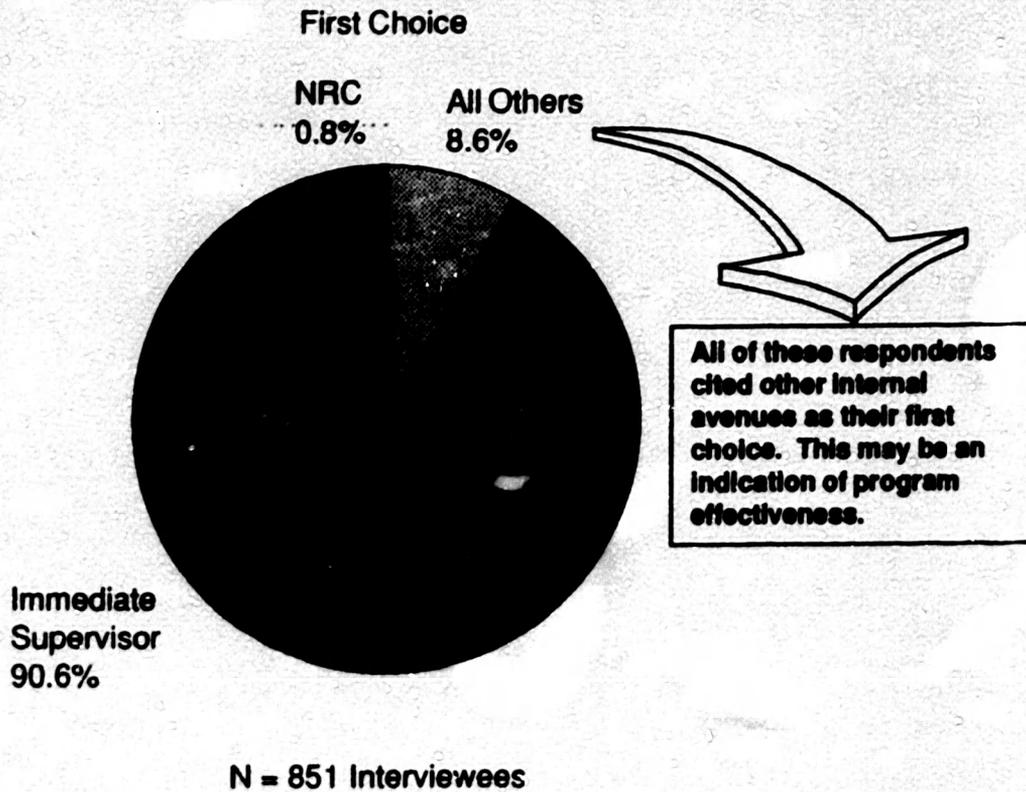
Avenues For Reporting a Concern Top Three Choices



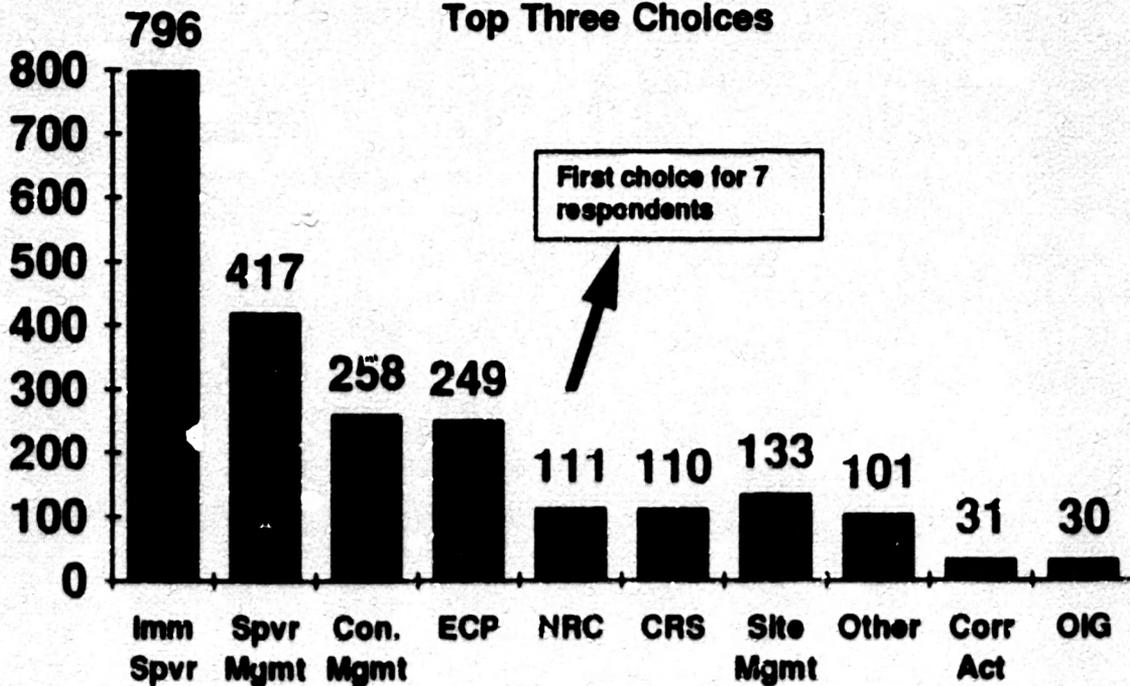
N = 896 Interviewees

TVA CONTRACTORS

To whom would you report a concern?



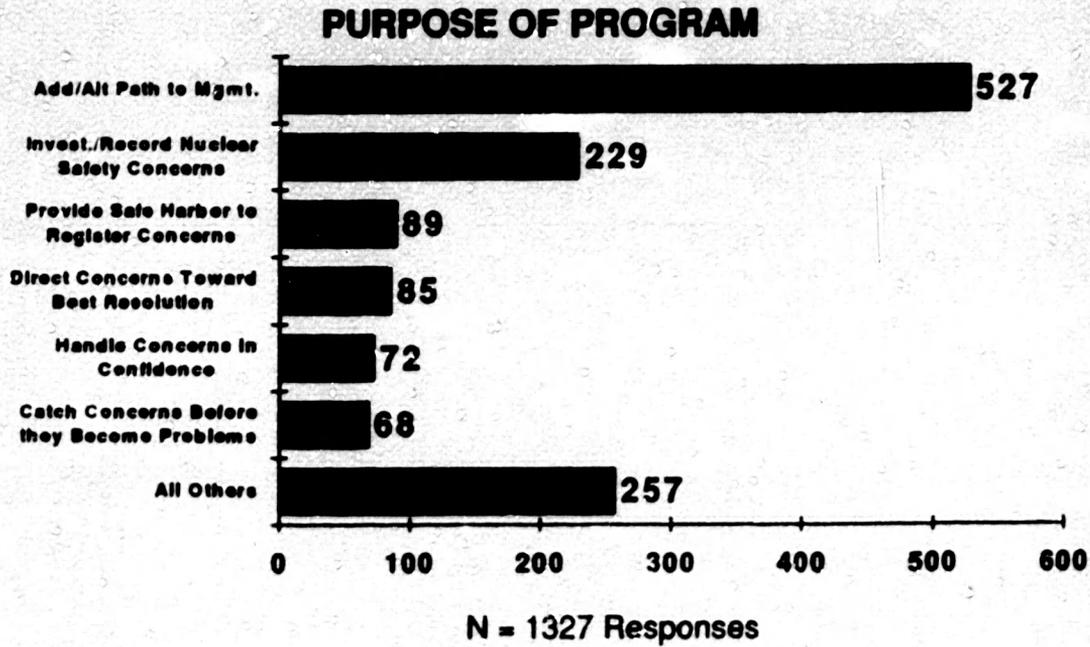
Avenues For Reporting a Concern Top Three Choices



N = 851 Interviewees

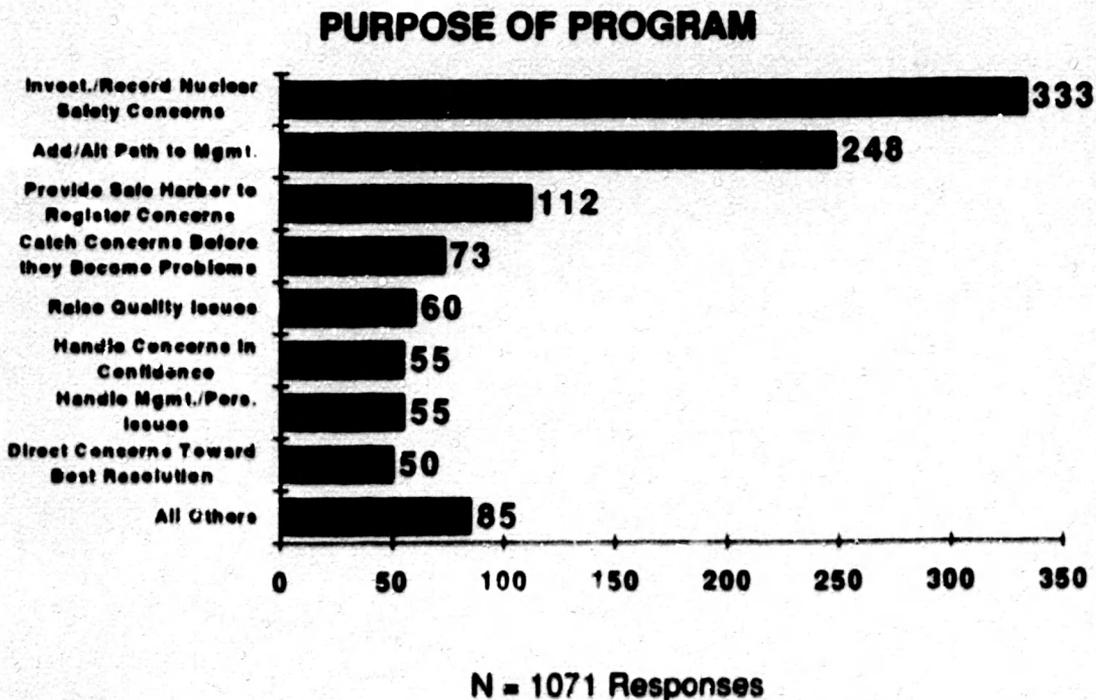
TVA EMPLOYEES

The majority of TVA employees understand CRS's role.



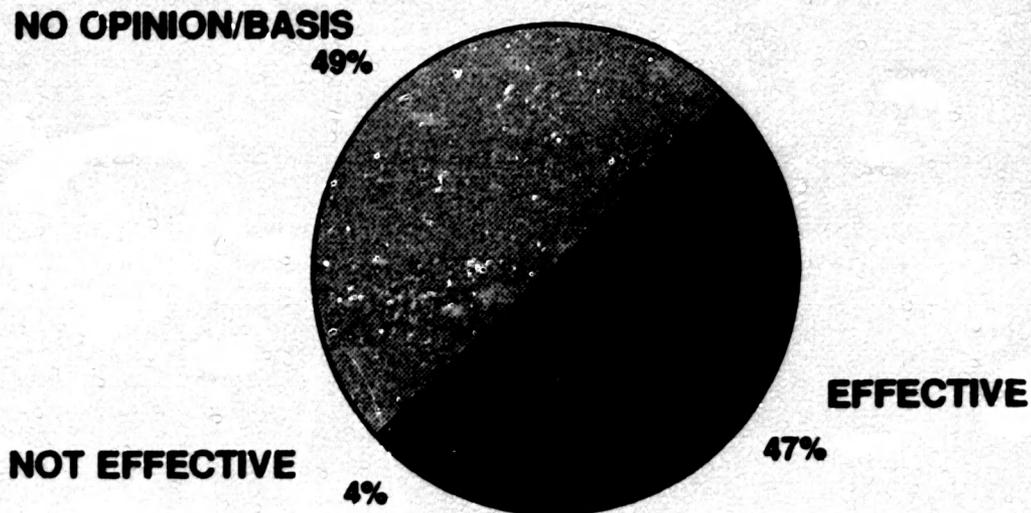
TVA CONTRACTORS

The majority of TVA contractors understand ECP's role.



TVA EMPLOYEES

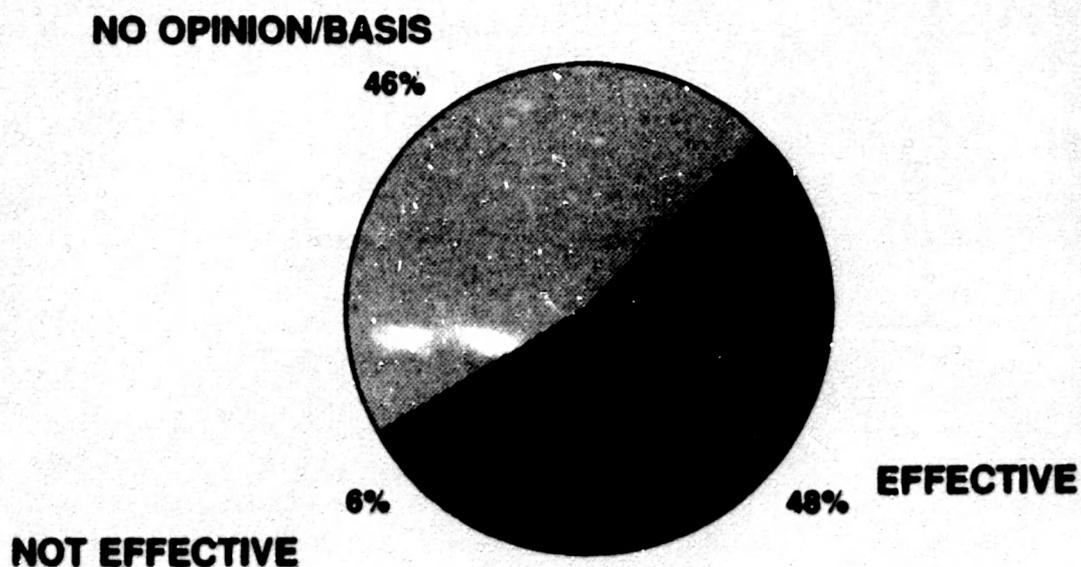
Perception of CRS effectiveness.



N = 1327 Responses

TVA CONTRACTORS

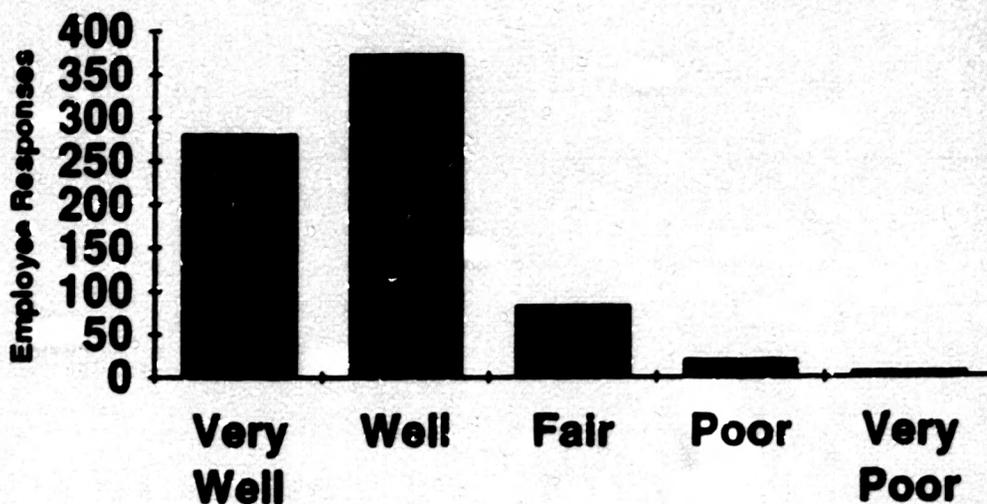
Perception of ECP effectiveness.



N = 1071 Responses

TVA EMPLOYEES

How well problems are being resolved.

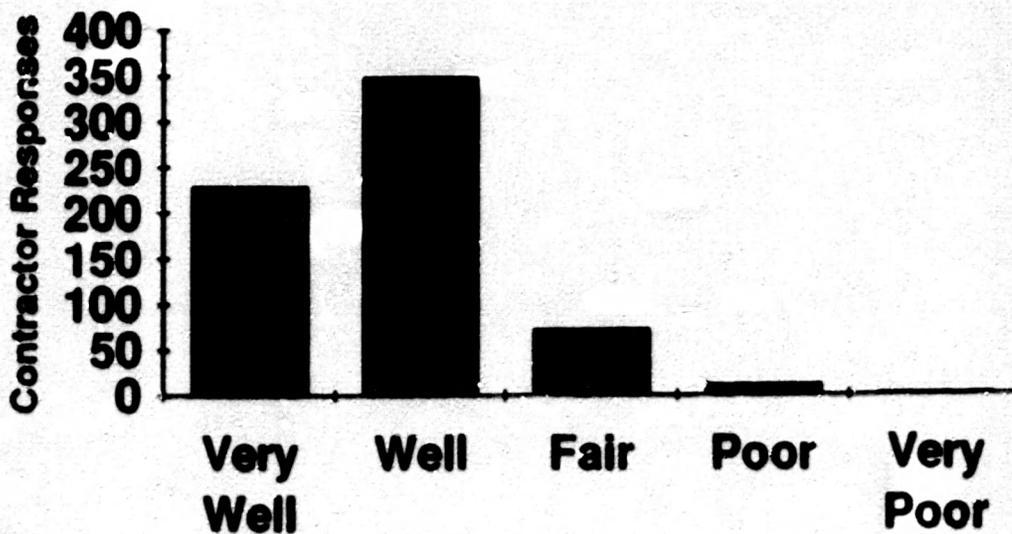


N = 884 Interviewees

127 of the respondents indicated they did not have enough experience with the program to formulate an opinion.

TVA CONTRACTORS

How well problems are being resolved.

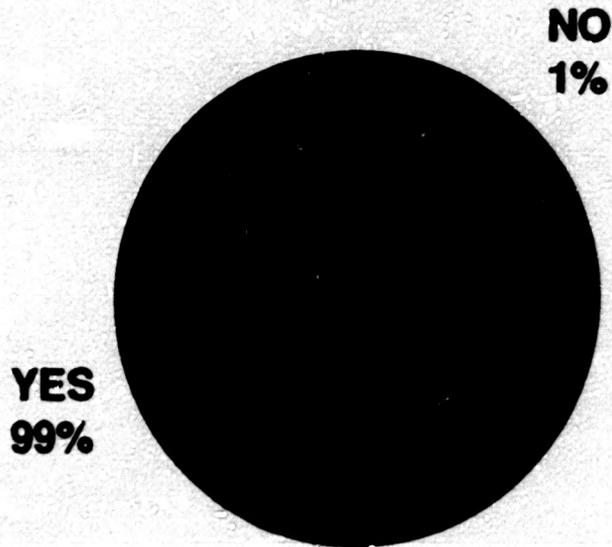


N = 826 Interviewees

164 of the respondents indicated they did not have enough experience with the program to formulate an opinion.

TVA EMPLOYEES

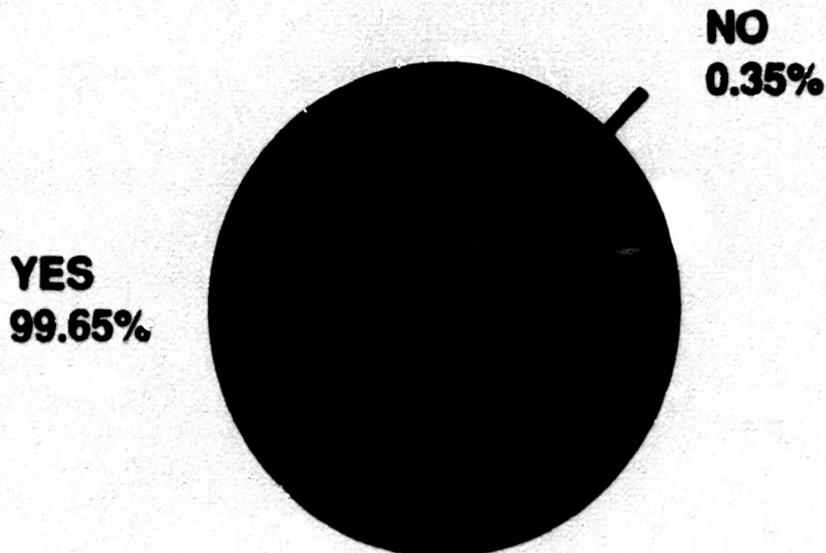
Would TVA employees report concerns via some avenue.



N = 904 Interviewees

TVA CONTRACTORS

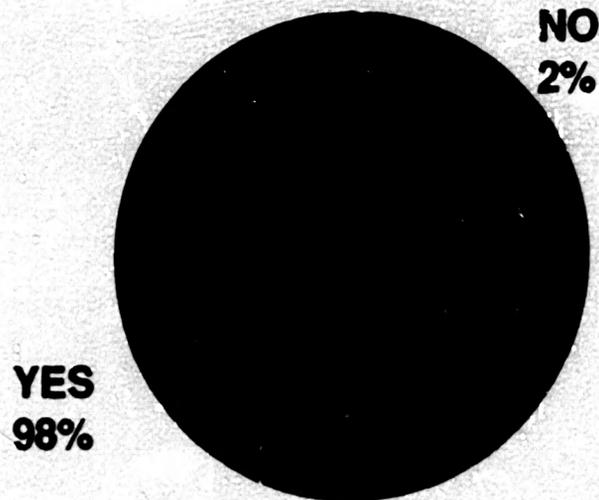
Would TVA contractors report concerns via some avenue.



N = 856 Interviewees

TVA EMPLOYEES

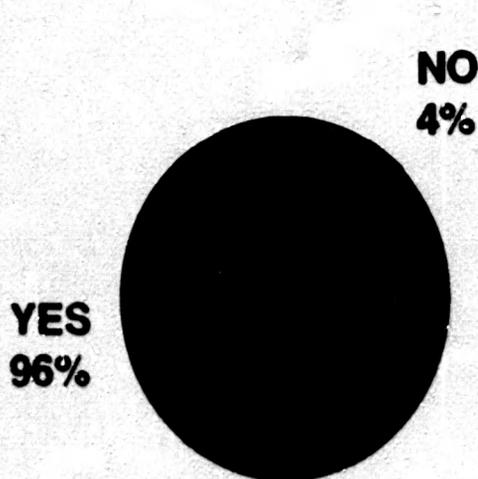
TVA Employees who know about CRS.



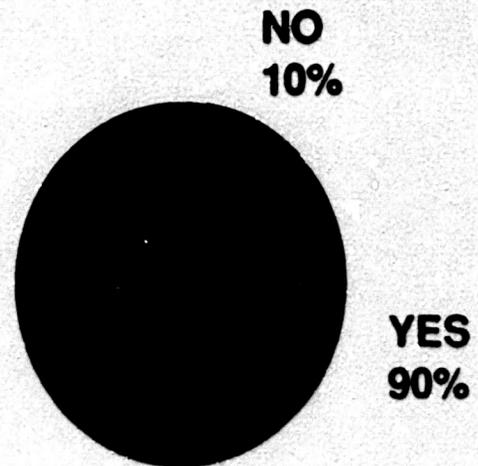
N = 901 Interviewees

TVA CONTRACTORS

TVA Contractors who know about ECP/CRS.



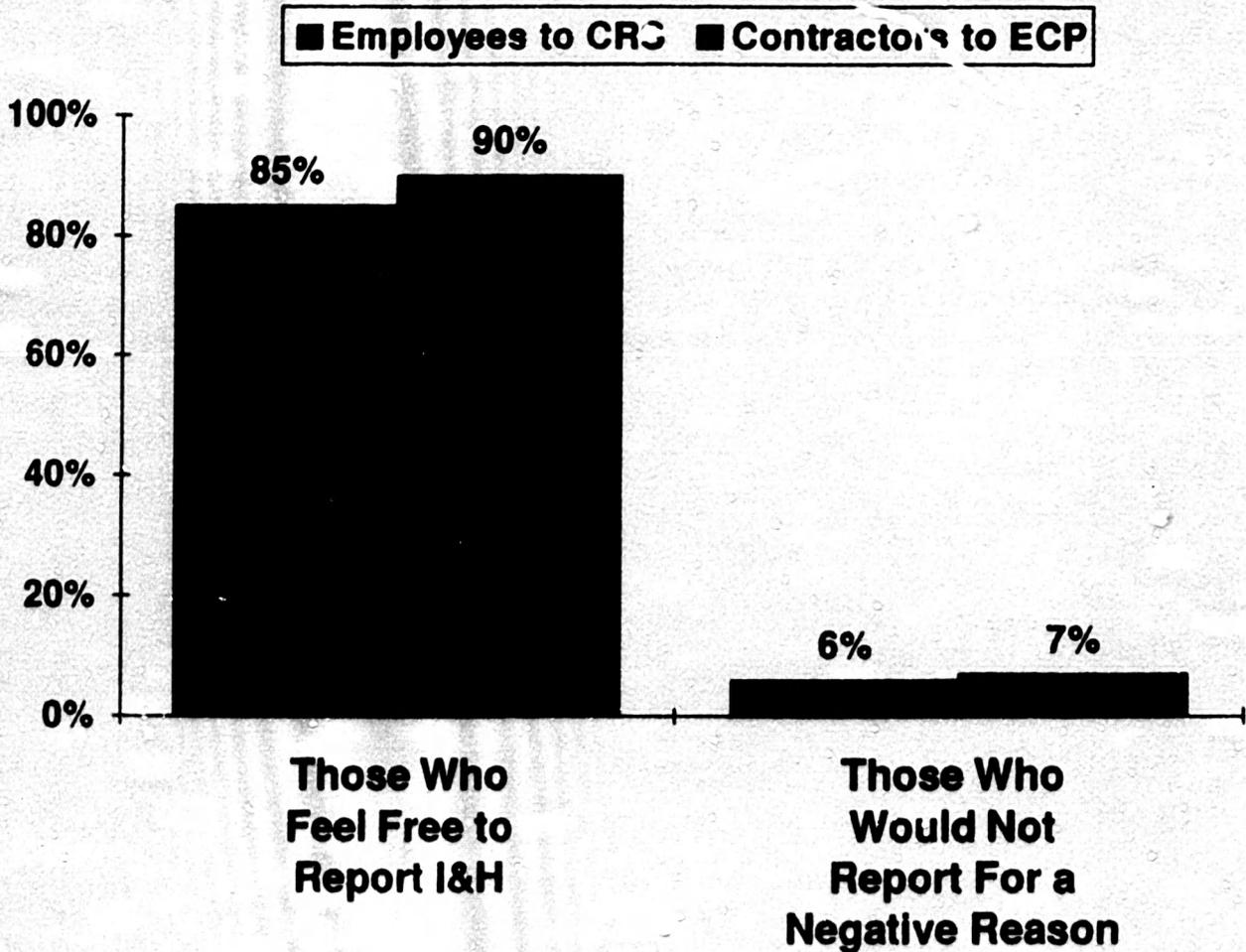
ECP
N = 841 Interviewees



CRS
N = 853 Interviewees

TVA EMPLOYEES/CONTRACTORS

TVA employees/contractors who feel free to report
Intimidation & Harassment issues to CRS/ECP.



Employees = 878
Contractors = 831

ENCLOSURE 4

Provided below are the contents and status of the developmental program instituted for the WBN quality control section supervisor and the effectiveness of our corrective actions.

Through the use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), training plans were developed for this individual. The IDP is part of the overall appraisal system. The IDPs for FY 1992, FY 1993, and to date, in FY 1994 for this individual include the use of reading assignments, audio tapes, and classroom courses. Reading assignments included: "Getting to Yes" and "Guidelines on Leadership Diversity." Audio tape assignments included "Getting to Yes," "Managing Interpersonal Relationships," and "Executive Writing, Speaking and Listening Skills." Classroom courses included attending: "Persuasion and Influencing Skills," "Social Styles," "Effective Handling of Employee Concerns," "Total Quality Awareness," "Facilitation Skills," and "Customer Focus." The training has concentrated on developing interpersonal and communication skills. Observations of satisfactory performance improvements have been noted in performance appraisals.

More specialized training in the areas of writing and speaking skills is scheduled for the current appraisal period.

TVA considers the planned efforts have achieved satisfactory results. The supervisor better understands methods for appropriately resolving personnel problems and also has developed an improved interpersonal working relationship with employees.