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January 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Suspicious Visitor Encounter at Kansas State University Reactor Facility
on January 13, 2010

ABSTRACT

At 3:18 PM on January 13, 2010, a woman approached the control room to the Kansas State University (KSU) research reactor. She asked several specific questions about facility security and appeared hesitant to give personal information. Following her departure, the University Policy Department (UPD) and NRC were contacted. The UPD identified the woman as a harmless paranoid who attended school at KSU.

EVENT DESCRIPTION

At 3:18 PM on January 13, 2010, the KSU TRIGA Mark II research reactor was operating at full power when a woman approached the open control room door. The woman was Caucasian, 5'7" – 5'11" tall, had black hair, a black pea coat, and tan pants. She carried a white mesh bag which contained an unknown red object. She appeared to be 35 – 45 years old.

The woman commented about the open control room door, and asked if it was always open, such that she could just walk inside. (Facility security policy does not require the control room door to be secured if operators are present). She commented about our biometric hand readers, and appeared to glance at the door strikes. She asked if she would need a background check in order to take a tour of the reactor. The student operators commented that she would need to surrender her bag and sign in to take a tour. She said that she was a student, so an operator asked what her major course of study was. She replied "Oh, a little bit of everything." She then left the facility.

Due to concern over her specific, security-related questions, and her seeming unwillingness to disclose personal information, the staff called the UPD. The security video recording was rewound, and a still shot of the woman entering the building was shown to the UPD. The Reactor Manager, Jeffrey Geuther, called the NRC Project Manager, Cindy Montgomery, instead of calling the Operations Center due to the low

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perceived threat. It is also of note that the event did not constitute a reportable occurrence. Later in the afternoon the KSU staff contacted the Headquarters Operations Office to brief them on the event. An email was sent to the Training, Research, and Test Reactor (TRTR) mailing list to warn other reactor staffs of a possible threat.

The UPD later identified the woman as a psychology graduate student at KSU with mental health problems. In particular, she is known to be paranoid about perceived security problems at KSU. UPD does not consider her to be a threat to the reactor facility.

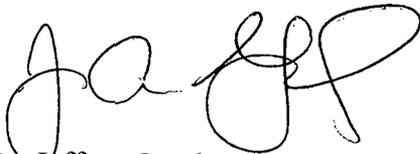
FOLLOW UP ACTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The NRC instructed the KSU Reactor Manager that the KSU staff should have contacted the Operations Center at NRC Headquarters immediately despite the low perceived threat of the suspicious visitor, and despite the fact that the event was not classified as a reportable occurrence. The UPD instructed the reactor manager that the police department should have been called earlier, even if that meant responding to a false alarm, since they were not called until the visitor had left the building. Both of the above instructions were passed on to the reactor staff, and are expressions of the preference toward erring on the side of caution. In other words, it is better to respond to false alarms than not to respond to true alarms. Clearer guidance or a briefing on proper response to non-reportable occurrences would be useful.

The use of video surveillance equipment with a recording function allowed the rapid identification of the visitor. Staff training on the use of the video equipment and recording software is necessary to expedite the use of this capability. Proper and sufficient ambient lighting is necessary to identify persons on surveillance video, especially at reactor access points.

The reactor staff will be trained on unescorted access procedures and the handling of facility security information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Geuther', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Jeffrey Geuther
Nuclear Reactor Manager
Kansas State University

Cc: NRC Region IV Office
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