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ENCLOSURE 5

July 20, 1990

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Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Region II
Atlanta, GA 30323

SUBJECT: Operator License Requalification Examinations
Oconee Nuclear Station

During the Operator License Requalification Examinations conducted at Oconee Nuclear Station from July 9 until July 20, you and your team were very professional. Even though the examination process is extremely stressful to the operators, you conducted the examination within the limits of the examiner standards to minimize that stress as much as possible. You were quite flexible when arranging the schedule. You also tried to put the operators at ease, especially during the JPMS. The simulator is the ultimate stress generator for the operators, but you and your team made a real effort to stay clear of the operators to minimize your presence. You could have made more efforts to minimize stress for the training instructors. Unimportant issues were debated too often.

During the simulator examinations two items of confusion in the Emergency Operating Procedure were noted. The first item involved SG shell cooling. The EOP will be revised to clarify instructions when SG shell cooling is required. Followup operator training will also be completed. The second issue involves appropriate SG level following a small break LOCA. Improved guidance and/or training will be given concerning the use of the SG Operating Range instrumentation and the SG Extended Startup Range instrumentation. These were not the only EOP weaknesses noted during the exam, but I wanted to communicate my intentions to you.

Another generic weakness involved the classification of a SG Tube Leak accident with a steam line break in the other SG. Emergency Plan changes will be considered. Training will be conducted.

I would also like to review simulator examination expectations. For every simulator scenario an operating crew strives for ideal performance. In spite of everyone's best efforts, the true description of ideal performance can not be defined nor can it be demonstrated. As the next best level of expectations, the operators themselves and Operations management have desired expectations. The next lower level of performance is best described as the operator training instructors' minimum expectations. The next lower level of performance should be the

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NRC examiners' minimum expectations. Of course, the performance which results in equipment damage is much much lower than the NRC expectations. There must be a recognized difference between these levels of performance expectations. Also, the minimum expectations of Operations can not be lower than the training instructors or the NRC. The NRC also can not demand performance near ideal, or the operators being examined will have little respect for the training and evaluation process. The credibility of the NRC examination process hinges upon realistic minimum performance standards.

The operators are all very proud of their personal ability. They can accept a determination from the training instructors or their peers that additional training is needed. They want to do well. However, an NRC determination of a "failure" on the simulator is a morale crushing blow. An NRC failure unjustly given during an exam can destroy mutual efforts to improve operator performance.

NRC examiner standards currently permit an operator to miss one individual critical task on the simulator and still pass the operating exam. Two missed individual critical tasks will result in an exam failure. The NRC may fail an individual for missing a single critical task. Thoughtful review of individual critical tasks is needed to align minimum expectations.

The simulator scenarios were very challenging. In fact the combinations of failures were unrealistic and too far beyond design basis events to test operator abilities. Your expectations are too high on scenario difficulty.

The issue of video control needs to be reviewed. I would like access to the exam video to assist with the critique. I would also like to use this video with individuals to explain weaknesses observed.

The stressful part of the examination process involves the simulator. The operators feel their destiny and livelihood is in your control which makes them uncomfortable. The importance of minimum expectations is obvious. If minimum expectations are properly aligned, the operators will realize they control their own destiny. This situation is much less stressful.

The Training Staff, the Operations Staff and I appreciate the cooperation you and your team have demonstrated.

RLSweigart

Richard L. Sweigart
Superintendent of Operations

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