



State of New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection and Energy
Division of Environmental Safety, Health
and Analytical Programs
Radiation Protection Programs

Robert C. Shinn, Jr.
Commissioner

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May 20, 1994

Mr. James T. Wiggins, Acting Director
Division of Reactor Safety
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
475 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406

Dear Mr. Wiggins:

Subject: Salem Unit 1 Augmented Inspection Team

In accordance with the provisions of the July 1987 Memorandum of Understanding between the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Energy (DEPE), the DEPE is providing feedback regarding the April 7, 1994 Alert at Salem Unit 1 and the subsequent NRC Augmented Inspection Team (AIT). As you know, the New Jersey DEPE's Bureau of Nuclear Engineering (BNE) observed part of the performance of the AIT. In keeping with the spirit of the agreement between the DEPE and the NRC, the DEPE will not disclose its inspection observations to the public until the NRC releases its final AIT report.

This participation was especially valuable for our nuclear engineering staff. It allowed us to gain immediate understanding of the actual events and plant conditions leading to the Alert declaration on April 7. This information has been shared with DEPE management. Our representatives were impressed with the diligence of the AIT members and their ability to expeditiously sift through a complex series of events. The AIT Team Leader was extremely cooperative and open to our representatives' questions and concerns. All team members had inquisitive attitudes, allowing for effective information gathering from PSE&G and analysis within the team.

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We are continuing to review all available information concerning the Alert. Overall, the information we have seen is consistent with our observations of the AIT. The May 10, 1994 internal memorandum from Mr. Martin, NRC Regional Administrator, to Mr. Taylor, NRC Executive Director of Operations, clearly described the chain of events and the results of the operator interviews. We have two specific subjects we have not seen addressed in the information made available to date and we have one general concern.

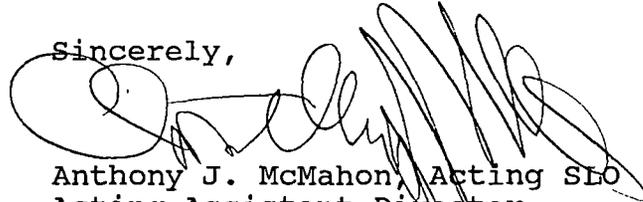
First, the NRC and PSE&G have stated that spurious high steam flow signals have been experienced before at Salem Units 1 and 2. We understand that other Westinghouse units have experienced this problem as well. We are concerned that these past spurious signals have not been shared within the industry or if it was shared, there may be a weakness in PSE&G's ability to evaluate industry experience. If the AIT is not assessing this matter, we recommend follow-up through the inspection process.

Second, following the first safety injection on April 7, operators reported that trouble alarms were received on all three diesel-generators and an urgent trouble alarm was received on one of the diesel-generators. An SRO was dispatched to the diesel-generators. He found all diesels operating properly and reset the alarm which was attributed to low starting air pressure. We recognize this is unrelated to the events that led to the declaration of the Alert. However, it may indicate that a problem exists with the diesel-generators that operators have learned to cope with. Certainly, responding to an urgent trouble alarm in an emergency situation is a distraction that should be avoided.

Third, our general concern involves an apparent inconsistency in statements made by NRC senior management and the results of the previous two SALP periods. NRC has expressed concern with long-standing cultural and equipment problems at Salem Units 1 and 2. The results of the previous SALP reports are not consistent with these observations. In fact the latest SALP report indicates some improvement. We are concerned over the effectiveness of the SALP process to reflect the true assessment of this utility's performance. Perhaps we could discuss this issue at an appropriate time.

If you have any questions, please contact me at
(609) 987-2189.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony J. McMahon', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Anthony J. McMahon, Acting SLO
Acting Assistant Director,
Radiation Protection Element,
DEPE

c: Kent Tosch, Manager, DEPE
Dave Chawaga, SLO, NRC

Attachment: DEPE/NRC MOU