



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

JUL 2 1979

Mr. Herman R. Staudt
900 Commerce Drive
Oak Brook, Illinois 60521

Dear Mr. Staudt:

Your letter of May 9, 1979 to Chairman Hendrie concerning establishment of a new "safety" position at nuclear power plants to improve the readiness and capability of utility personnel to respond to emergencies contains elements which are consistent with our thinking. We are moving ahead with measures to improve the training of plant operating personnel and to assure that utility management and technical support personnel are capable of quickly and effectively responding to emergencies. Your idea of establishing new "safety" positions jointly sponsored by the government and industry is novel and constructive; however, as you recognize, it would undoubtedly be controversial and difficult to implement.

We agree with you that the NRC has a unique responsibility to the public to insure that safety, integrity, technical competency and the authority to act promptly and according to the public's primary interest are vested in a person or team located at each nuclear power plant. We require that any individual who manipulates the controls of a nuclear power plant or any individual designated by the facility licensee to be responsible for directing the activities of reactor operators be licensed by the NRC. We also require that the facility licensee issue instructions to such individuals which emphasize their responsibility for safe operation of the nuclear power plant. We are looking at a variety of methods to further emphasize the responsibility for safe operation of the plant and to provide additional assistance to plant operators in carrying out their responsibilities. Some of the options advanced by individuals, in addition to your proposal, include: (1) stationing a federal employee in the control room on a 24-hour basis to monitor operations; (2) requiring the facility licensee to station an engineer in the control room, in addition to the present control room operators, to act as a safety monitor; (3) requiring each operating shift to have at least one technical advisor with acceptable engineering training who has plant design knowledge in addition to that required by current NRC license criteria and; (4) taking additional steps to further emphasize the present operators' responsibilities for safe operation of the plant including increased training.

790814 0243

653 325

As you may be aware, the Commission has directed the staff to conduct a thorough review of current NRC requirements and guidance to licensees for qualification of reactor operators. As part of this study we will give consideration to the proposals described above and to the points raised in your letter. Short term actions are being taken to get an immediate increase in safety of nuclear power plants. We fully expect that additional actions will be taken as our review of the Three Mile Island accident progresses.

I am enclosing for your information a document which describes the procedures and criteria for issuance of reactor operator and senior reactor operator licenses. This document was produced to assist applicants and facility licensees to a better understanding of the pertinent parts of the Commission's regulations. A review of the enclosed document may produce additional suggestions. If so, we would be pleased to hear them.

While I have not attempted to comment on each point in your letter, I would like to respond to your observation that the government often influences salaries and fringe benefits of key personnel in regulated industries. We have recently conducted a statistical sampling of nuclear power plants. Salaries for operators varied from \$18,000 to \$26,000, depending upon geographic location and seniority. Salaries for senior operators varied from \$19,000 to \$40,000, also depending upon geographic location and seniority.

If you should have additional thoughts, we would be pleased to consider them. In this regard we have established a "Lessons Learned" task force within the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation to study the Three Mile Island accident, including the review and evaluation of investigative information, staff evaluations of responses to NRC bulletins and orders, staff recommendations and recommended actions from outside of the NRC and to identify, analyze, and recommend changes to licensing requirements and the licensing process for nuclear power plants. This task force will also provide recommendations for interim requirements for new operating licenses prior to completion of long-term activities. The Task Force Chairman, Dr. Roger J. Mattson, may be reached by calling area code 301 (492-7517).

Sincerely,
Original Signed By
E. G. Case

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
As stated

653 326