



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

OFFICE OF THE  
CHAIRMAN

February 17, 1981

The Honorable Toby Moffett, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Environment, Energy,  
and Natural Resources  
Committee on Government Operations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your letter concerning the impact of an across the board hiring freeze on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This freeze will have a serious impact on our ability to support high priority programs and on our ability to meet the industry's current construction and operating schedules. We are particularly concerned about the public health and safety impact of the increasing number of reactor inspector vacancies.

The following statistics illustrate the dimensions of our problem:

- o Seven inspectors a month, on the average, resigned their positions during the first four months of FY 1981. This rate is up from FY 1980, and could result in 100 inspector vacancies by the end of FY 1981.
- o Three-fourths of our current 200 vacancies are in our three licensing and inspection offices which have direct responsibility for insuring public health and safety.
- o Approximately twenty percent of all offers are declined.

While the previous Administration's one-for-two hiring limitation had a serious impact on some programs, we still had the flexibility to fill our most important functions. Moreover, the complete exemption of inspectors from the limitation recognized the critical role these people play in assuring the safe operation of nuclear plants.

Major recruiting efforts over the last six months have resulted in our identifying and extending commitments of employment to about 300 individuals. We undertook this recruitment effort only after months of negotiation with the previous Administration to grant us a partial exemption from hiring restrictions. These commitments, when refusals and attrition are considered, would have brought us to our authorized level by the end of the fiscal year. Only the requirement to conduct lengthy security reviews has kept many of these people from being on board already. Due to the highly competitive nature of the nuclear industry, it is likely that a significant number of the individuals we have identified will not be available when the hiring freeze is lifted.

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The Honorable Toby Moffett

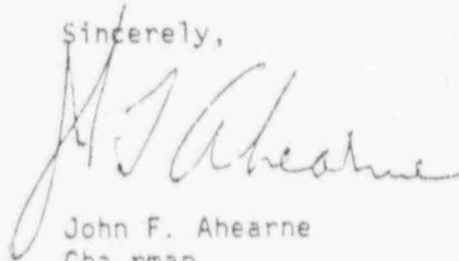
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In normal hiring circumstances, engineers with nuclear and related training and experiences are difficult to hire and retain in the Federal service. There exists a universal recognition of a critical shortage of qualified personnel in this field. Our ability to employ these individuals is hampered by government limitations on salaries, bonus incentives, profit-sharing and benefit packages which are available in the private sector.

NRC supports the objectives of President Reagan's hiring freeze, but we are concerned about our ability to meet our statutory responsibilities. Consequently, I have requested an exemption from OMB for NRC staff who perform licensing and inspection functions.

Specific responses to your questions are enclosed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. F. Ahearne".

John F. Ahearne  
Chairman

Enclosure  
As stated

Enclosure

The following is provided in response to your specific questions:

1. QUESTION: The number of individuals whose anticipated hiring will now be blocked by the hiring freeze.

ANSWER: We currently have 213 vacancies which the freeze prohibits us from filling. This figure can be expected to grow to about 453 if the freeze lasts through FY 1981. To fill these current and projected vacancies, we have made 292 job offers which we are now unable to honor. 149 of these offers have been accepted.

2. QUESTION: The Divisions and positions within the NRC and duties for which these individuals would have been hired but for the freeze.

ANSWER: The following highlights those organizations most adversely impacted by the freeze:

Office of Inspection and Enforcement - 98 vacancies.

Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards - 37 vacancies.

Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation - 25 vacancies.

Office of Standards Development - 11 vacancies.

Enclosed is a complete listing of all outstanding offers by office, division and position type which we are unable to fill due to the freeze and an office by office summary of those statistics.

3. QUESTION: An assessment of the impact of this freeze on particular programs, notably any programs having to do with the inspection of operating commercial reactors and any programs specifically initiated or strengthened by the NRC as a result of the analyses of the Three Mile Island accident.

ANSWER:

- ° The impact of the hiring freeze on the inspector program will be significant. We currently have 34 inspectors vacancies and can expect to lose 7 to 10 inspectors per month. At this rate, by the end of the fiscal year we estimate there will be 100 inspector vacancies or approximately 25 percent of the inspector workforce. The specific impacts are hard to identify as they will be a function of where losses occur and to what extent we can realign personnel to high priority programs. Adjustments will be made to minimize the impact on safety; but, from a purely statistical standpoint, we will miss about 15 to 20 percent of our planned inspections for the fiscal year. Some of these inspections will undoubtedly be at operating reactors.
- ° Operating license review schedules will not be met. This means delays in licensing new nuclear power plants when construction is complete, and subsequent delays in plants becoming operational.

- o The Waste Management Program is also impacted by our inability to bring on qualified personnel. In order to minimize the public health and safety impacts of uranium recovery operations, license renewals and amendments for operating facilities will take precedence over the licensing of new facilities. A continued hiring freeze will result in increasing the licensing time for a major new facility from one year to between two or three years. Should licensing actions in the areas of reprocessing of spent fuel and NFS West Valley program be required, further delays in these as well as other ongoing programs can be expected.

As a result of the analyses of the Three Mile Island Accident, we engaged in a major recruiting effort that required close to one year to staff a Human Factors evaluation group. Depending on the length of the freeze, the following programs which were specifically initiated or strengthened as a result could be seriously curtailed or deferred:

- o Implementation of reactor operator annual requalification examinations. This program is critical to ensuring NRC's safety oversight of operating reactors.
  - o Administration of certification examinations to students in operator training programs.
  - o Establishment of the Operator Licensing Regionalization Program.
  - o Implementation of most of the recommendations made in the plan for improving the technical capabilities of licensee personnel.
  - o Development and implementation of guidelines to uniformly evaluate nuclear power reactor control room designs and both normal and emergency operating procedures.
  - o Evaluation of licensee, state and local emergency plans and procedures.
4. QUESTION: A reasonable estimate of the cost of honoring the freeze by aborting these hiring plans: e.g. the cost of lost recruitment efforts, sums expended for security clearances on prospective hires that will now be annulled, etc.

ANSWER: The cost spent in the recent recruiting efforts are significant:

\$ 92,580 - personnel office expenses

96,000 - invitational travel of applicants

26,222 - program officials' salary spent in interviewing time

12,000 - recruiting trips

\$226,802 - Total Cost

This cost figure is conservative. It represents approximately four months of staff efforts.

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
 REPORT ON FULL TIME PERMANENT EMPLOYEES  
 AS OF FEBRUARY 5, 1981

OFFICE	CEILING	ON BOARD	OFFERS PUT	OFFERS ACCEPTED	TOTAL COMMITTED POSITIONS	BALANCE TO CEILING
COMM	31	26	-	-	26	5
ACRS	39	35	-	1	36	3
SECY	41	37	-	-	37	4
DIA	28	26	-	-	26	2
ASLBP	36	31	3	-	34	4 OVER
ASLAP	15	16	3	-	19	8 OVER
OGC	24	27	2	3	32	2
PA	18	16	-	-	16	-
CA	9	9	-	-	9	-
PE	18	18	-	-	18	-
EDO	11	13	-	-	13	2 OVER
ADM	428	409	7	22	438	10 OVER
ELD	96	102	4	3	109	13 OVER
CON	68	58	1	6	65	3
EEO	4	5	-	-	5	1 OVER
IP	31	33	-	-	33	2 OVER
SP	27	24	-	-	24	3
MPA	75	76	-	-	76	1 OVER
SDBU	2	1	-	-	1	-
AEOD	22	20	-	2	22	-
STDS	161	150	7	9	166	5 OVER
NRR	684	659	16	28	703	19 OVER
NMSS	329	292	8	27	327	2
RES	163	162	2	-	164	1 OVER
IE	976	878	90	48	1016	40 OVER
TOTAL	3336	3123	143	149	3415	79 OVER

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