

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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In the Matter of: :
:
METROPOLITAN EDISON COMPANY :
:
[Three Mile Island Unit 2] :
:
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Room D-4,
Howard Johnson Motel,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania,

Wednesday, 24 September 1980.

INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL BENSON,

commenced at 10:35 a.m.

APPEARANCES:

NORMAN MOSELEY,)
Office of Inspection & Enforcement)
Nuclear Regulatory Commission)
Washington, D.C.)
TERRY HARPSTER,)
Office of Inspection & Enforcement) On behalf
Nuclear Regulatory Commission)
Washington, D.C.) of the
JOHN CRAIG,) Nuclear
Office of Inspection & Enforcement)
Nuclear Regulatory Commission) Regulatory
Washington, D.C.) Commission
DAVID GAMBLE,)
Office of Inspector & Auditor)
Nuclear Regulatory Commission)
Washington, D.C.)
RICHARD HOEFLING, ESQ.,)
Office of the Executive Legal Director)
Nuclear Regulatory Commission)
Washington, D.C.)

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(Appearances, continued:)

ERNEST BLAKE, ESQ.
 Shaw, Pittman, Potts & Trowbridge
 Washington, D.C.,

Appearing for Metropolitan Edison.

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#1
NRC-TMI
Benson 1
9/24/80

P R O C E E D I N G S

(10:35 a.m.)

2
3 MR. GAMBLE: This interview is being conducted as
4 a portion of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's investigation
5 and the exchange of information between the Metropolitan Edison
6 Company and the NRC on March 28th, 1979.

7 Mr. Benson, would you please raise your right hand?
8 Whereupon,

9 MICHAEL LYNN BENSON

10 was called as a witness in the above-entitled matter and,
11 having been first duly sworn, was examined and testified as
12 follows:

13 EXAMINATION

14 BY MR. GAMBLE:

15 Q. Please state your full name.

16 A. Michael Lynn Benson. "Lynn" is L-y-n-n.

17 MR. GAMBLE: Would counsel present please identify
18 himself.

19 MR. BLAKE: My name is Earnest Blake. I am with
20 the law firm of Shaw, Pittman, Potts and Trowbridge,
21 Washington, D. C., and I am here representing Metropolitan
22 Edison Company.

23 MR. GAMBLE: Mr. Benson, Mr. Blake is representing
24 Metropolitan Edison Company. Do you have any objections to
25 his presence here in this interview?

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1 THE WITNESS: No, sir.

2 MR. GAMBLE: Thank you.

3 BY MR. HARPSTER:

4 Q Is it "Mike"?

5 A Yes.

6 Q Mike, in your testimony to the Senate Investigation
7 on October 15th, 1979, you stated that on March 28th, 1979,
8 you were aware in Unit 1 of the containment pressure spike in
9 Unit 2.

10 I have a copy here of your Senate testimony, if
11 you'd like to take a look at pages 35 and 36.

12 (Handing document to the witness.)

13 A I remember saying that; yes.

14 Q Were you aware on March 28th, 1979, that containment
15 spray had actuated?

16 A I was aware during the time span, between the 28th,
17 29th, and 30th, that it happened by, not fact, but I guess by
18 rumor. I had heard something about it, although I wasn't in
19 the Unit 2 control room, nor did I see any instrumentation or
20 hear any noises or anything of that type.

21 Q Well, perhaps I'm still a little confused. It has
22 to do with the way the transcript reads here. I couldn't tell
23 if this was your quote or not. You state here:

24 "We actuated the spray." Does that mean that you
25 knew on March 28th that you actuated the spray?

1 MR. BLAKE: The confusion that you have, Terry,
2 was where the quote should shop? Whether somebody came over
3 and said that on the 28th, or didn't?

4 MR. HARPSTER: That's what I don't understand. Is
5 he saying that he knew they actuated the spray on March 28th?
6 I can read it either way, and it is not clear to me.

7 THE WITNESS: The thing I am trying to say is:
8 The rumor I heard was that it actuated; that nobody told me
9 that directly, or I didn't see it happen, or see any indication
10 of it; I just heard that it happened. But I am not sure when
11 I actually heard that; whether it was on the 28th, or the 29th,
12 or possibly the 30th.

13 MR. HOEFLING: You're not clear as to --

14 THE WITNESS: In my earlier testimony. I've told
15 people that the days did run together. The crew I was working
16 with, the ECS, ran continuously from about 7:00 that morning,
17 and the first time I left the site was to take a break the
18 next morning. Then I went over to the observation center and
19 came back to the Island a couple hours later. The time span
20 is very close together. I might not be sure if it was the
21 28th, or the 29th, or the 30th.

22 BY MR. HOEFLING:

23 Q Well, now I'm a little confused. Were you aware
24 that there was a pressure spike on the 28th?

25 A I'm not sure if it was the 28th that I was aware of

1 that or not. I was aware, after the fact, by rumors, that
2 there was a pressure spike and probably a building actuation.

3 Q But you're not sure --

4 A But I'm not sure that the 28th I was told that.
5 I might have been aware that it happened on the 28th, but I
6 might not have been aware of it until the 29th or the 30th,
7 after the fact. That's what the statement was trying to say
8 there.

9 Q Let me take you up a little higher here --

10 ~~Q~~ "Were you aware of the hydrogen spike on the 28th" --

11 THE REPORTER: Could we have one person at a time?

12 BY MR. HOEFLING:

13 Q So when we look at your response here on page 35
14 of the testimony, the question being:

15 "Aside from that, were you aware of the spike,
16 the containment pressure spike on the 28th?"

17 Your response: "Yes, I have to say I was."

18 It's your testimony now that you're not that
19 certain? Or you are uncertain?

20 A Well, the question here is, it says:

21 "Were you aware of the containment spike on the
22 28th?"

23 And I said, "Yes, I was aware of that." But I
24 didn't say I was aware of it on the 28th. It was probably the
25 29th or the 30th, after the fact.

1 MR. HARPSTER: Could we have a two-minute recess
2 here.

3 (Recess.)

4 MR. GAMBLE: On the record, please.

5 BY MR. HARPSTER:

6 Q Mike, let me reread a part of your previous
7 testimony into the record. I refer to page 35 of your Senate
8 testimony of October 15th, 1979, starting at line 9:

9 "MR. BLUSH: Aside from that, were you aware of the
10 hydrogen spike, containment pressure spike, on the 28th?

11 "MR. BENSON: Yes, I have to say that I was.

12 "MR. BLUSH: How were you aware of that?

13 "MR. BENSON: I'm not really sure how that informa-
14 tion came to me.

15 "MR. BLUSH: You were in Unit 1?

16 "MR. BENSON: Uh-huh. I'm not sure how it came
17 across -- if one of the operators coming over from Unit 2
18 would have said, 'something's really strange; we actuated
19 the spray.' I really don't know how it could of came over
20 because we were always calling Unit 2 control room for
21 information and the RMS, and they were calling us for
22 information over the hot line. It could have come in in
23 a lot of different ways."

24 Now, Mike, let me ask you again. The way I read
25 this, the way we had interpreted this, that you were aware on

1 the 28th of this. And as I read the words down here, "Perhaps
2 you can take us back to the ECS," were you in the ECS on Unit
3 2 on subsequent days, or Unit 1 on subsequent days?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Were you talking on a phone line with Unit 2? Did
6 they have a continuous phone line on subsequent days?

7 A. Yes. We didn't go out of the ECS mode until July.
8 So I was actually in Unit 1 ECS from March 28th until the
9 middle of July when we went back to normal engineering.

10 Q. Let me ask you, on line 18, in the context you've
11 answered this thing, where you are saying that an example of
12 the way you may have become aware of it is: "Something's
13 really strange. We actuated the spray."

14 As I read this, I get the impression that that's
15 the way you would find out about it on the 28th. If you had
16 found out about it later, you would have stated it differently,
17 that "I had become aware on the 28th" of something, as opposed
18 to -- I keep getting the impression that you are talking about
19 the 28th here. But perhaps you can help me out.

20 BY MR. GAMBLE:

21 Q. In other words, if somebody came to you two days
22 later and that was the first you had heard of it, they
23 wouldn't say "something is really strange; we actuated the
24 spray." That sounds like a present-time relation of what is
25 going on right now, rather than what happened two days ago.

1 MR. BLAKE: Is there a question?

2 THE WITNESS: That's not really true. If a person
3 found out about it two days later, two days after the fact,
4 it would be strange to him that two days later ^{when} ~~he~~ became aware
5 of it.) N R

6 BY MR. MOSELEY:

7 Q But wouldn't there have been, if it was two days
8 later, everyone at this point concluded that it was a hydrogen
9 spike, a hydrogen bubble, and wouldn't that have been the thing
10 that people would have been talking about? Rather than the
11 actuation of the spray?

12 A I'm not really sure.

13 Q It would seem to me that the fact of the spray
14 starting is more startling on the 28th when probably few people
15 really connected the pressure spike to a hydrogen burn. Yet,
16 after Thursday when the spike had been pursued to some depth,
17 there was a rather general conclusion that that's indeed what
18 had happened. And the thrust of discussions, I would expect,
19 would be toward that rather than the fact of the spray starting.

20 The entire line of questions and the answers seem
21 to lead to a conclusion that this must have been on the 28th;
22 and that's why we are trying to ask you to try to recall again
23 as best you can, with what was occurring at the time, since
24 the days do merge for you, what was occurring at the time
25 which you could perhaps tie it to.

1 Would you try to recall and see if you can relate
 2 to other events that were going on at the time you believe you
 3 heard of this?

4 (Pause.)

5 A. I can't really tie it into any particular time or
 6 place or individual, but I was aware of it. But I won't say
 7 it was the 28th that I was aware of it. It may have been the
 8 29th, or it may have been the 30th.

9 And the way I would have heard about it, somebody
 10 would have said that the spray is actuated. Yes.

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1 Q Well, it wouldn't be unusual at all, based on the
2 other testimony, for you to have heard it on the 28th. We have
3 testimony that says it was discussed rather generally, so it's
4 not farfetched that you may have heard it?

5 A It's possible, it could have been -- I was in Unit 1
6 control room the 28th and 29th and 30th, and was continuously.
7 It could have been any of those days. It could have been the
8 28th, late night on the 28th, it could have been the 29th. I'm
9 not sure. I really -- I can't put a timeframe on it when I
10 heard about that, at all.

11 BY MR. HARPSTER:

12 Q Can you recall, irrespective of the timeframe, if
13 when you heard about it, it was your impression it was a real
14 spike, as opposed to electrical failure or instrument malfunc-
15 tion?

16 A During those three days, I was very busy with the
17 running of the offsite teams, monitoring of the radiation dose,
18 windspeed direction, the plume travel. A building spike wouldn't,
19 even when it did come to my attention, earth-shaking -- really
20 taking my attention away from what I was doing. So I can't --

21 Q You were changing the position of the offsite
22 teams, directing them to take samples; is that correct?

23 A Yes.

24 Q We have previously had testimony from Joe Chwastyk
25 that as a result of the containment pressure spike, there was

1 a question of containment integrity, and he directed offsite
2 monitoring and some other checks to take place. Were you aware,
3 for instance, of any additional monitoring taking place as a
4 result of these concerns, as you would have been the person
5 directing the teams?

6 A No, I don't. If I had the ledger of the monitoring
7 done, I may see some type of increased readings or something
8 that would refer to that, but I can't say yes or no right now.
9 After the teams got running, we ran a team on the west side,
10 a team north and south, and onsite. So I don't remember ever
11 running them any more often than that. It was continuous four
12 teams most of the time.

13 Q But you think you do -- or you would remember if you
14 had to reposition the teams because someone had expressed a
15 concern over the integrity of the containment?

16 A If it would have come across from Chwastyk to me
17 personally, I probably would have remembered it -- remember it
18 right now, yes. It may not have come, you know, to me directly.
19 I was just one of the people working in the ~~teams~~ ^{ECS}. It could
20 have been to the emergency coordinator, which would have been
21 ^{related to} -- it varied from day to day, from Selinger, Kunder; in later
22 days, it was ^{Tsagaris} ~~Sig Harris~~ and Potts. And it may have come to me
23 by them saying is there a team in this area, and I'd say, well,
24 they're getting a break, and he'd say, well, hurry up the break
25 and get them out quicker. That may have been the extent of my

1 knowledge at that immediate time.

2 Q Okay.

3 BY MR. MOSELEY:

4 Q Mr. Benson, did you say earlier that if you heard of
5 the containment pressure spike on March 28th, it wouldn't have
6 made any particular impression on you? Did you say that earlier
7 in this interview?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And what's your educational background?

10 A Nuclear engineering.

11 Q And that wouldn't have caused you -- the fact that
12 there was a pressure spike in containment wouldn't have caused
13 you to think the problem that was underway in Unit 2 was more
14 severe, or that was a significant event in this occurrence?

15 A It would probably come across to me that the building
16 spray actuated for a very short time, and that would have been
17 the extent of what I would have been told, and that would not
18 have bothered me to any great extent.

19 Q Are you aware of what is required in order for
20 containment sprays to come on, what conditions have to exist?
21 Were you aware on the 28th?

22 A The pressure in the building would cause them to come
23 on, yes.

24 Q Were you aware of that on the 28th?

25 A Did my knowledge entail, to have enough knowledge to

1 know that the building spray coordinated with high building
2 pressure? Yes, on the 28th, I would have been that educated.

3 Q Then I guess I have to ask you again if you had known
4 the containment spray had started, wouldn't you have known that
5 it had to be a real pressure increase for it to come on?

6 A I won't say that for instruments to work, there is a
7 direct effect, when you are in the middle of the incident we
8 had, that the building sprays would have had to come on because
9 of pressure, that some other malfunction couldn't have started
10 them, or they couldn't have been started by remote control. I
11 won't say that's a one-to-one correlation there.

12 BY MR. HARPSTER:

13 Q Can you give us some other credible explanation of
14 how you could start them?

15 A I'm not really sure as to how you could start them,
16 but there has to be a manual -- they could have been started
17 without a pressure spike.

18 BY MR. HOEFLING:

19 Q Mike, if someone came to you and said the contain-
20 ment sprays had started yesterday or the day before yesterday,
21 and then it stopped, would that impress you, that they had run
22 for a brief period of time yesterday or the day before yester-
23 day, and then had been shut off?

24 A That it had already happened?

25 Q That it happened in the past.

1 A That would have probably had the same effect that
2 I'm saying. It wouldn't have been a direct -- I can't feel it
3 was a direct one to one, it's happening now, ^{as}~~has~~ it happened a
4 couple days ago, or it happened yesterday or yesterday evening
5 or something.

6 Q Let's try it this way: If someone came to you and
7 told you the containment sprays had actuated and were running
8 now, would that have a greater effect on you, do you think,
9 than if someone told you that they had run yesterday, the day
10 before, and then were shut off?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Why is that?

13 A I'd probably ask for a reason why they're running
14 right now, why they're running, for some explanation.

15 Q You think that that would have had more significance
16 to you, a real time context instead of something in an
17 historical context?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Okay. The problem we're having with your testimony
20 that's been read into the record is that it could be read --
21 it could be read to mean that you were actually aware on the
22 28th of that pressure spike by rumor, or however. Are you
23 telling us now that it was not your intent when you gave this
24 testimony, to give that impression?

25 A That's true.

1 Q And what would have been your intent, or what was
2 your intent?

3 A My intent would have been, as an example, if somebody
4 came to me today and said, "Are you aware that Bob had a car
5 accident two days ago?" I'd say, "Yes, I was aware of that,"
6 but that wouldn't refer -- that wouldn't mean that two days ago
7 I was at the scene of the accident and actually physically saw
8 it. It would mean that, yeah, in two days or in the timespan
9 I became aware of it, and that's what I'm -- that's what my
10 intent to say here is, that during some timespan I was aware of
11 that, but I'm not saying that it was a one-to-one when it
12 happened, because I -- I'm positive that I wasn't aware of it
13 at the time that it happened, but some time in history after
14 the fact I became aware of it. That's why it would have come
15 across from an operator through the grapevine versus a direct
16 command to me.

17 BY MR. HARPSTER:

18 Q Mike, have you had any licensing training, the training
19 given for the licensing of operators?

20 A No, sir.

21 Q Have you had any training with regard to the
22 redundancy and diversity of the safeguards instrumentation, the
23 SFAS instrumentation?

24 A I have had some training in that, several years ago
25 when I first came to the company, B&W type of training. SFAS

1 was not my area of expertise.

2 Q Would you, on March 28th, have had a working knowledge
3 of the diversity of the power supplies for the SFAS components
4 and for the redundancy of instrumentation, say at the level
5 expected of a licensed operator?

6 A No, sir.

7 BY MR. MOSELEY:

8 Q Well, let's ask you, were you aware of redundancy
9 and diversity in these, even though you may not have been
10 aware that the specific power sources or the specific instrument
11 channels, were you aware that they were diverse and redundant
12 on March 28th?

13 A No, sir.

14 Q You were not aware --

15 A I couldn't tell you if it took three instrumentations
16 or three signals or two or just one. I couldn't tell you that.

17 Q On March 28th, you would not have known -- is this
18 your testimony -- you would not have known that a single
19 instrument could not give you containment spray actuation?

20 A That's correct.

21 BY MR. CRAIG:

22 Q How many pounds pressure does it take to actuate
23 containment sprays? Do you have a feel for that?

24 A No, sir. I'd say probably in the range of 10 pounds.

25 Q And that would have been your guess on the 28th?

1 A Yes.

2 MR. HARPSTER: Mike, thank you.

3 (Discussion off the record.)

4 BY MR. MOSELEY:

5 Q Let's go back on the record.

6 Mr. Benson, did you have communications with the
7 state on March 28th, by telephone or by personal contact?

8 A I possibly could have had it on the 28th, during
9 the accident. We had telephone lines to the state, the Margaret
10 Riley group, to transmit radiation readings that we were
11 receiving with our offsite teams for their records. I'm not
12 sure if I talked personally, would have talked on the 28th. I
13 know that during the time period between the accident and July,
14 that I did talk to the state, but I'm not sure, positive, on the
15 28th I would have -- it could have been -- could have been any
16 one of the several of us that would have talked to the state.

17 Q Do you have any recollection of the information that
18 was transmitted to the state? If you were participating in
19 this, what was the type of information that you transmitted to
20 them?

21 A We would have transmitted radiation readings. An
22 example would have been if we had got a 10 millirem reading in
23 the center of Middletown at 12:00 o'clock noon on the 29th,
24 that would have gone across. We would have told them that
25 the reading -- the quadrant in Middletown at 12:00 o'clock was

1 10 millirem. That was the information we transmitted.

2 Q I'm particularly interested on the 28th, and I'm also
3 particularly interested in your recollection of what you
4 personally transmitted, if you could address those.

5 Let me amend the question. When I say you personally
6 transmitted, or you have recollection recalling specific things
7 that someone else knew or heard being transmitted.

8 A No specifics.

9 Q Well, let me ask the question this way:

10 Do you recall any transmission to the state that
11 involved anything other than radiation survey readings?

12 A Not really. The people that we talked to in the
13 state, to the best of my knowledge, were more secretary-oriented
14 than management, because at times we'd say readings gamma,
15 and they'd ask me to spell it. So I don't think -- I think the
16 people that we talked to were mostly secretarial type.

17 Q But to answer the specific question: You don't
18 recall any information other than radiation survey readings?

19 A No, sir. There would have been no reason to give
20 any other type of information to a secretary other than what we
21 were giving.

22 MR. MOSELEY: Okay. Thank you.

23 MR. CRAIG: I have one last question.

24 BY MR. CRAIG:

25 Q Can you associate, regarding your knowledge of

1 containment sprays being actuated, the name of any person, a
2 place or a thing that you can recall at the time when you first
3 had knowledge that the sprays had been actuated?

4 A No, sir.

5 Q So you know that you knew it, and that's all that
6 you know about it; is that correct?

7 A Yes.

8 MR. MOSELEY: Thank you, Mr. Benson.

9 (Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m., the interview was
10 concluded.)

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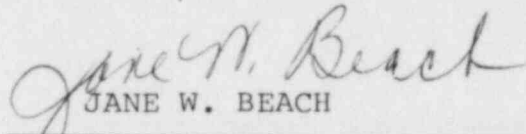
in the matter of:

Date of Proceeding: Wednesday, 24 September 1980

Metropolitan Edison Company [TMI Unit 2]
Docket Number: DEPOSITION OF MICHAEL BENSON

Place of Proceeding: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

were held as herein appears, and that this is the original transcript thereof for the file of the Commission.


JANE W. BEACH

Official Reporter (Typed)



Official Reporter (Signature)

SHAW, PITTMAN, POTTS & TROWBRIDGE

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EDWARD B. CROSLAND
COUNSEL

October 27, 1980

*NOT ADMITTED IN D.C.

Mr. Norman C. Moseley, Director
Division of Reactor Operations Inspection
Office of Inspection and Enforcement
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Moseley:

Enclosed are signed correction sheets for the transcripts of September 24, 1980 interviews of Michael L. Benson and Michael J. Ross. Mr. Benson has provided some six corrections; Mr. Ross has indicated no corrections.

Sincerely,

Ernest L. Blake, Jr.
Ernest L. Blake, Jr.

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enclosures

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT

Corrections to the September 24, 1980, Interview of Michael L. Benson:

<u>Page</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>To Read</u>
✓6	10		It's a question and not an answer.
✓9	4		him that two day later he [to]
12	11		... him, two days later, when he ...
✓12	19	teams	[to] ECS
✓12	20	<u>add</u>	been related to
✓12	22	Sig Harms	[to] Tsaggarris
15	3	has	[to] as

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Michael L. Benson

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