

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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In the matter of: :
:
METROPOLITAN EDISON COMPANY :
(Three Mile Island Unit 2) :
:
- - - - -X

Meeting Room D-4
Howard Johnson Motel
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Wednesday, September 24, 1980

INTERVIEW OF THEODORE FRED ILLJES

commenced at 11:20 a.m.

APPEARANCES:

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

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APPEARANCES (continued):

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Office of the Executive Legal Director)
Nuclear Regulatory Commission) of the NRC
Washington, D. C.)

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(11:20 a.m.)

MR. GAMBLE: On the record.

This interview is being conducted as a portion of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's investigation into the exchange of information between Metropolitan Edison Company and the NRC on March 28th, '979.

Would you please raise your right hand?

Whereupon,

THEODORE ILLJES

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

MR. GAMBLE: Would you please state your full name for the record.

THE WITNESS: Theodore Fred Illjes.

MR. GAMBLE: And counsel present, would you please identify yourselves?

MR. VOIGT: I am Harry H. Voigt of LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby & MacRae in Washington, D. C.

MR. MC BRIDE: I am Michael S. McBride of LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby & MacRae, Washington, D. C.

MS. PENNY: I am Jane G. Penny, Killian & Gephart, P.O. Box 886, Harrisburg 17108.

MR. GEPHART: I am Smith B. Gephart, Killian &

1 Gephart.

2 MR. GAMBLE: Thank you.

3 BY MR. HARPSTER:

4 Q Mr. Illjes, our review of your previous testimony
5 to the I&E investigators on May 23rd, 1979, has identified
6 some conflicts with the testimony of other Metropolitan Edison
7 GPU employees. If you will let me summarize these areas
8 briefly, I will attempt to straighten them out here.

9 While I am summarizing, let me give you a copy of
10 the I&E testimony I'll be referring to. This is a copy of
11 pages 6 through 10 of the I&E testimony on May 23rd, 1979.

12 (Handing document to witness.)

13 You arrived in the Unit 2 control room at approxi-
14 mately 3:45 on March 28th, 1979. At that time, you along with
15 the foreman and two other control room operators were briefed
16 by Joe Chowastic. As part of that briefing and turnover, you
17 were told that they had a spike on both indications of the
18 reactor building pressure recorder, and that they had recovered
19 from reactor building isolation.

20 There was discussion during that evening regarding
21 a hydrogen explosion as the possible cause of the spike. It
22 was related to cycling of the electromagnetic relief valve.

23 Later that evening, copies were made of the spike.
24 Part of your certainty about the timing -- that is, that it was
25 the evening of March 28th -- was based on the fact that you had

1 learned that evening that you had a hard bubble and that it
2 was hydrogen.

3 Now before we proceed to the question, would you
4 care to review those pages? Or would you like me to just start
5 in?

6 MR. VOIGT: Why don't you go ahead.

7 BY MR. HARPSTER:

8 Q You previously testified that one of the control
9 room operators briefed along with yourself that evening was
10 John Kidwell. Do you recall who the other control room
11 operator or shift foreman was?

12 A Chuck Mill was the other man on shift that evening.
13 He was a trainee at the time, I believe.

14 Q Can you recall who the shift foreman was?

15 (Pause.)

16 A We were operating, and I don't remember who the
17 shift foreman was; no.

18 Q Examination of the reactor building pressure
19 recordings by the I&E Investigators as part of NUREG 0600
20 determined that it was unlikely that the spike was Xeroxed
21 on March 28th, 1979.

22 Mr. Bensil has testified that it was after March
23 28th, 1979, either Thursday or Friday when he removed the
24 reactor building pressure recordings, and he testified to that
25 in his Senate testimony. Mr. Bensil's recollection is in

1 general agreement with the recollection of others in the
2 control room as to the removal of those charts.

3 How do you explain the discrepancies between this
4 information and your prior testimony?

5 MR. VOIGT: What "prior testimony" are you
6 referring to?

7 MR. HARPSTER: His prior testimony to the fact that
8 the spike was Xeroxed -- removed and Xeroxed on the evening of
9 March 28th, 1979.

10 MR. VOIGT: Thank you.

11 THE WITNESS: Bad memory.

12 BY MR. HARPSTER:

13 Q Do you still believe, then, that the spike was
14 Xeroxed on the evening of March 28th, 1979?

15 A To my recollection.

16 Q Is it still your recollection that hydrogen was
17 discussed on March 28th, 1979, as a possible cause of the
18 pressure spike?

19 A To my recollection, we discussed the pressure spike.

20 Q Do you recall who you discussed it with?

21 A The other two men in the control room at the time,
22 and Joe Chowastic was sitting behind us, or in the near
23 vicinity. I don't remember if he was in the conversation or
24 not. But the other two men on the shift --

25 Q That would be Mill and Kidwell?

1 A. Yes.

2 BY MR. HOEFLING:

3 Q. Was hydrogen a part of those discussions, do you
4 recall?

5 A. I don't remember.

6 Q. When you said "pressure spike," you used that
7 intentionally? You were talking about the pressure spike?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And not necessarily hydrogen?

10 A. It's hard for me to separate all the discussion
11 that was made on that night. I can't really say, because it
12 was discussed how many times thereafter, and that far apart
13 I can't relate the difference.

14 BY MR. HARPSTER:

15 Q. Who else would have been aware, or might have
16 overheard the discussions relating to hydrogen or the pressure
17 spike?

18 (Pause.)

19 A. I can't picture everybody else that was there.
20 You know, there were other people there, but I don't remember
21 them by name.

22 Q. Is there anything else you can recall -- an event,
23 or anything else -- from that evening that might help us better
24 pinpoint in time, related to your discussions of hydrogen or
25 the Xeroxing of the spike, that we could work back from and try

1 to pinpoint that?

2 A. Not to my knowledge.

3 Q. Mr. Illjes, the other investigations into the
4 accident have concluded that it was not until after March 28th,
5 1979, that it was recognized that a hard bubble consisting of
6 primarily hydrogen remained in the reactor vessel head. How
7 do you explain the discrepancy between these conclusions and
8 your recollection that you knew on the evening of March 28th,
9 1979, that a hydrogen bubble already existed in the reactor
10 vessel head?

11 A. Would you say that again?

12 Q. I'm sorry. Let me restate it.

13 The other investigations to date have concluded
14 that it was not until subsequent to March 28th, 1979 -- either
15 late Thursday evening or early Friday morning sometime -- that
16 a realization took place that a hydrogen bubble existed in
17 the primary system in the reactor vessel head, this noncon-
18 densible bubble.

19 You have previously testified that the reason you
20 recall that you knew of the spike on March 28th, the evening
21 of March 28th, was that that same evening you became aware
22 that there was a hard bubble of hydrogen -- using your words
23 there -- which was in the reactor vessel head.

24 The discrepancy which I'm trying to resolve is the
25 contradiction in when you knew of the hydrogen bubble and

1 when the other investigations have concluded that there became
2 general knowledge of the fact that a hydrogen bubble, or
3 noncondensable gases still existed in that reactor system.

4 Can you explain the discrepancy between that?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Is it still your recollection that you were aware
7 of a bubble of hydrogen, or noncondensable gases, which
8 remained in the reactor vessel head on March 28th, 1979?

9 A. I can remember the bubble and the problem that we
10 had which we were trying to resolve at the time. I can remember
11 the bubble being in the "noncondensable bubble," so to put it.
12 I do remember that.

13 BY MR. HOEFLING:

14 Q. You remember that as something you recollect
15 knowledge of on the 28th?

16 A. (Nodding in the affirmative.)

17 Q. Could it have been the 29th? Could your recollec-
18 tion perhaps be faulty or shaded in some way? Could that not
19 have come to your attention until the 29th?

20 A. The bubble? No, it came to my recollection as we
21 were trying to restart the reactor coolant pumps and establish
22 a bubble in the pressurizer.

23 Q. Wasn't that done on the 29th, as well?

24 A. No. I believe we started to establish a bubble
25 on the 28th.

1 Q I realize that. So that is the event you are
2 keying on in your recollection? The starting of the pump on
3 the 28th?

4 A That, and establishing a bubble.

5 Q Establishing a bubble?

6 A In the pressurizer. In other words, turning the
7 heaters on. At the time we came in, the pressurizer was full,
8 or greater than 400 inches.

9 MR. HOEFLING: Okay.

10 BY MR. HARPSTER:

11 Q Mr. Illjes, a great deal of controversy has
12 existed over an apparent order which some Met Ed personnel
13 have testified was given on March 28th, 1979, to not energize
14 any unnecessary electrical equipment because of a concern
15 over sparking.

16 A What was the date, again?

17 Q On the 28th, sir. There was a concern over sparking
18 in the containment, and there apparently -- or some people
19 have testified that there was an order given on March 28th,
20 1979, not to start or energize any unnecessary electrical
21 equipment because of that concern.

22 Were you aware on March 28th, 1979, of such an
23 order or a concern?

24 A I don't remember any.
25

1 BY MR. HOEFLING:

2 Q Do you recollect such an instruction being given at
3 any time -- the 28th, 29th, or 30th, in that range?

4 A It's possible, sometime; I don't remember the order.

5 BY MR. MOSELEY:

6 Q If such an order were given, would your job
7 responsibilities have indicated that you should have known
8 about it?

9 A If an order was given, I would have followed it
10 out; yes.

11 Q That's not my question. My question is: Were your
12 job responsibilities such that if such an order were given it
13 would have come to you?

14 A It would have affected me because of the controls
15 I was operating. Is that what you mean?

16 Q Yes.

17 A Okay.

18 Q So that the things you were doing, if such an order
19 have been given, certainly it would have gone to you? That's
20 my question.

21 A True. True.

22 Q You recollect no such order on the 28th, 29th, or
23 30th time frame?

24 A It's hard to separate the time. I can't remember
25 specifically, but downline discussions it's possible that was

1 brought up. I can't remember somebody saying that order or,
2 you know, I can't remember writing it down on a turnover
3 sheet or something. I don't remember.

4 BY MR. HOEFLING:

5 Q You can't recollect someone having given it? Or
6 you having taken any actions based on it? Nothing like that?

7 A Sometime thereafter, I don't remember.

8 MR. HARPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Illjes. I think that
9 will do it. We will give you a copy of the transcript for
10 your review.

11 (Whereupon, at 11:38 a.m., the interview of
12 Mr. Illjes was completed.)

13 * * *

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

This is to certify that the attached proceedings before the

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

in the matter of: Metropolitan Edison Co [TMI Unit 2]

Date of Proceeding: Wednesday, 24 September 1980

Docket Number: DEPO. OF THEODORE FRED ILLJES

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)

Jane W. Beach

Official Reporter (Signature)

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT

Corrections to the September 24, 1980, Interview of Theodore F. Illjes:

<u>Page</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>To Read</u>
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None

Theodore F. Illjes
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Date 12/4/80