

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
631 PARK AVENUE
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406

May 11, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: John A. Harris, Director
Office of Public Affairs

THRU: Joseph J. Fouchard, Assistant Director

FROM: Karl Abraham, Public Affairs Officer

SUBJECT: VISUAL NEWS MEDIA AT PUBLIC HEARINGS

I believe the time has come to change NRC practice with regard to limiting news media coverage of public hearings involving applications for construction permits or operating licenses, or oral arguments before an Appeal Board.

In an increasing number of states, new Sunshine Laws admit the graphic news media (newspaper photographers and television) to trials that used to be closed to cameras.

The public also has begun to draw a distinction between "limited appearances" and "evidentiary hearings." It is very hard to tell people at a hearing that the limited appearance portion, which altogether resembles a town meeting, is the same thing as an evidentiary hearing, which clearly resembles a civil suit.

Also, I am looking forward to the change of procedure which would place the limited appearance portion of the hearing in the prehearing conference setting (where it would be even more unlike a court action) rather than at the beginning of the evidentiary hearings.

I recommend that the Office of Public Affairs propose to the Commission a change of procedure and practice that would open the limited appearance portion of a hearing to coverage by the visual media, in addition to the already established print media and radio tape coverage. Also, I think it is appropriate for the Commission to take the position that each Chairman of



John A. Harris

-2-

May 11, 1977

an Appeal Board have the option of opening an oral argument session to coverage by the news media. Furthermore, I recommend that such an opening of oral argument session be encouraged by the Commission when the Appeal Board convenes near the site in question rather than at NRC Headquarters.

Karl Abraham

Karl Abraham
Public Affairs Officer