

REPORT OF INTERVIEW
WITH
DARREL L. BLAIN

BLAIN was interviewed by Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Senior Investigator Daniel R. Gietl, Office of Investigations, Region IV, at the Fort St. Vrain (FSV) nuclear plant in Platteville, Colorado, on February 12, 1992. Attorney Salie B. O'MALLEY with the law offices of KELLY, STANSFIELD, and O'DONNELL was also present during this interview. After some discussion, BLAIN requested that O'MALLEY remain for the interview as his representative. BLAIN agreed to be interviewed regarding the events surrounding the termination of [redacted] Health Physics Technician (HPT), by Public Service Company of Colorado (PSC) from FSV in March 1991.

BLAIN has been employed by PSC as a floor health physics supervisor (HPS) since September 23, 1991. Prior to that time, he was an HPT with PSC at FSV from November 12, 1990, until beginning his current position. BLAIN stated he was first employed with PSC as a contract HPT on July 7, 1985, and hired as a company employee by PSC on March 12, 1986.

BLAIN was shown a statement provided to the Department of Labor (DOL) on April 22, 1991, and he identified this as the statement he provided the DOL investigator. BLAIN stated this statement is an accurate representation of what he told the DOL investigator. Referring to that statement, BLAIN was asked what he meant by "he decommends those instruments." BLAIN stated he was referring to the counting instrument and the detector. BLAIN said this is a device used to count wipes as part of their duties as an HPT.

BLAIN stated that on March 14, 1991, he had been assigned by his supervisor, Bill WOODARD, HPT supervisor, to oversee the floor operations that morning. According to BLAIN, WOODARD was out of town that particular day. As the acting supervisor, BLAIN stated he knew a lot of work needed to be done that day, and when he arrived at the fuel deck, he realized there was work that should have been completed the night before that had not been done. Further, BLAIN stated the counting machine that [redacted] needed to count his wipes for that day's work had to be used first to count the wipes that [redacted] a PSC HPT, had not done on the night shift. 7c

BLAIN stated that on that particular morning, March 14, 1991, [redacted] was coming off the night shift at the time they were starting the day shift, and [redacted] advised that she had not counted her wipes from the night before as she claimed one machine was contaminated, and the other machine had a Minimum Detectable Activity (MDA) that was too high. BLAIN recalled that [redacted] had appropriately locked up these particular wipes in a radiation waste area. BLAIN stated that after going to the fuel deck area where the counting machines were, he determined that the one machine did not have too high an MDA and was at the same level it had been for the past 2 weeks, and the wipes should have been counted. BLAIN stated he did not make his determination that the MDA was at an acceptable level until after [redacted] had left FSV for the day.

BLAIN stated he was in charge and did not initially report this to anyone, and he did not confront [redacted] with this incident. BLAIN stated that at the time

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he was decontaminating the other machine, on the morning of March 14, 1991, Quality Assurance (QA) Engineer, Paul MILES, came up to talk to [REDACTED] who was counting the wipes left by [REDACTED] from the night before. BLAIN stated he did not recall if he told [REDACTED] to count those wipes before starting his job, or if [REDACTED] just did it because he knew they had to be counted first. MILES then came to BLAIN, and he told MILES that the wipes from [REDACTED] could have been counted and that work would be slowed down a great deal because the wipes had to be counted.

There was some discussion with BLAIN as whether a safety violation existed because the wipes were left uncounted. BLAIN did acknowledge that a safety problem could have occurred somewhere in the building; however, at the time, BLAIN did not advise MILES that a safety problem could have existed because [REDACTED] had not counted her wipes, but may have told MILES there may have been a contamination somewhere. BLAIN, after some discussion, did acknowledge that based on his years of experience on the fuel deck, there was a high probability that was no safety violation, but there was a possibility that a wipe could reflect a contaminated area above normal safety levels. Therefore, BLAIN stated that without doing the counts, it would not be known for sure that there were no contaminated areas. Further, according to BLAIN, there could have been an area that would not be notified as soon as possible, and the area would go unmarked as a safety concern. BLAIN stated that the counts done by [REDACTED] reflected that all the wipes were below safety levels.

BLAIN was asked that since there was the potential safety violation, no matter how improbable, why not address it with [REDACTED] BLAIN stated that the wipe count proved to be acceptable and also because he had no authority to discipline an employee.

BLAIN stated that MILES returned that same day, and they agreed to talk to WOODARD about [REDACTED] not having read the wipes. BLAIN stated he believed this event occurred on a Friday, and WOODARD returned on the following Monday, at which time he informed WOODARD of the event. BLAIN did not make any recommendation, but told WOODARD that MILES wanted to talk to him about this event. BLAIN did not recall talking to anyone else about this event except [REDACTED] although he can not recall the specifics of the conversation. BLAIN said he never did talk to PORTER about this event.

BLAIN stated that WOODARD called him into his office on March 21, 1991, and informed him he was going to lay off [REDACTED] that day and give him 2 weeks notice; however, WOODARD did not offer any explanation. BLAIN said he was surprised, as it was his understanding that two other contract HPTs would be laid off. BLAIN was shown a copy of a PSC information/night log, dated March 4, 1991, and BLAIN identified his initials at the bottom of this log, which reflected that he had read the log. BLAIN noted that item #3 stated that two contract HPTs, [REDACTED], would be let go at the end of March due to uncertainties with fuel shipping. BLAIN stated this log was prepared and issued to the staff by WOODARD.

BLAIN stated that it was his professional opinion that [REDACTED] was very good and conscientious in doing his job, and BLAIN always enjoyed working with him. Further, BLAIN stated the other HPTs worked well with [REDACTED] and they all got along well. BLAIN added, in his opinion, and he believes it is the opinion of the other HPTs, that [REDACTED] was an incompetent HPT. BLAIN stated,

that many of the events resulting from her poor performance, even though the probability may have been low, caused potential safety violations. BLAIN further stated that these problems have been there since [redacted] started with PSC at FSV. BLAIN stated he and the other HPTs had made complaints to WOODARD over the years about [redacted] and WOODARD always responded, "fix it." BLAIN stated he felt it was not his position to fix it as this was the result of poor work by a fellow worker, [redacted]. BLAIN stated he is not sure what actions that WOODARD may have taken, but they must have been minor as they had no effect on the problem. BLAIN stated he and [redacted] often voiced their concerns to WOODARD when these incidents with [redacted] occurred.

BLAIN was asked why he didn't go to QA, the NRC, or to WOODARD's boss when he did not receive any response or action to his concerns. BLAIN stated that WOODARD's boss, Ted BORST, attended some of these morning or mid-day meetings where concerns were raised. BLAIN stated he never singled out [redacted] at these meetings because they were attended by all of the HPTs.

On the afternoon of March 21, 1991, BLAIN stated someone told him that he should walk by WOODARD's office. BLAIN stated he got to a point where he could see in the window, and WOODARD and [redacted] were talking. WOODARD looked out at BLAIN, and it was obvious to BLAIN that [redacted] was being laid off. [redacted] looked up, opened the door, and told BLAIN he was being laid off, and he wanted BLAIN to come in the office. BLAIN told [redacted] he was sorry, but there was nothing he could do about it and then left the area. BLAIN stated that he did hear [redacted] state that the action was unfair, and he would take legal action. A short time after the meeting, [redacted] came to BLAIN's desk and was still upset he had been laid off. According to BLAIN, [redacted] informed that he would go to Scientific Ecology Group (SEG), a subsidiary of Westinghouse, to see if he could get a job. SEG, according to BLAIN, had been hired to do the decommissioning of FSV. [redacted] then rose and said he was going to see Ken ZARHT about a job and was going to stop by and see J. B. BAIRD, NRC Resident Inspector, about his safety concerns. BLAIN stated that 10 or 15 minutes later, [redacted] phoned him and told him he was now being escorted off-site by WOODARD, and he would not be coming back.

BLAIN stated that, when asked why [redacted] was laid off, it was his opinion that it was easier to let a contract HPT go than to let a PSC HPT go. BLAIN stated that none of the HPTs got along with [redacted]. BLAIN stated that [redacted] now works for him. BLAIN stated that two people had been hired to replace WOODARD, one was himself, and the other was Rob GRANT.

According to BLAIN, Tim SCHLEIGER stayed out of the day-to-day activities. BLAIN said that WOODARD originally replaced SCHLEIGER, who moved up to health physics management. BLAIN said he did not know if SCHLEIGER knew of the safety problems with [redacted] but assumed that he knew.

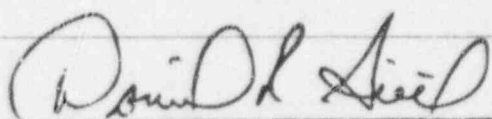
BLAIN stated there was no sexual harassment or discrimination of by any of the HPT personnel. BLAIN said he has never seen or heard of any of this type of harassment. BLAIN denied that any of the complaints made by the HPT personnel regarding [redacted] could be construed as harassment. The HPTs were doing their job in reporting potential safety violations.

BLAIN was asked to comment on his knowledge of a note that [redacted] wrote to [redacted] at WOODARD's direction, about some wipes that [redacted] had left in the

HPT office. BLAIN stated it was his understanding that after [redacted] read the note, she went to WOODARD and said [redacted] was harassing her. BLAIN stated that neither WOODARD or BORST ever made any comment that he is aware of regarding [redacted] harassing [redacted]

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This report prepared on February 12, 1992, from investigator's notes.



Daniel R. Gletl, Senior Investigator
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