

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Agency: U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Title: INTERVIEW ~~of~~ of GEORGE SCHNIEDER and SANDRA THREATT

Docket No.

LOCATION: WAYNESBORO, GEORGIA

DATE: MARCH 29, 1990

PAGES: 1-21

ANN RILEY & ASSOCIATES, LTD.
1612 K St. N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 293-3950

9202200395 920116
PDR ADOCK 05000424
S PDR

U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

INTERVIEW OF:

GEORGE SCHNIEDER
SANDRA THREATT

)
)
)
)

Conference Room
Administrative Building
Vogtle Electric Generating Plant
Waynesboro, Georgia

Thursday, March 29, 1990

The interview commenced at 11:15 a.m.

APPEARANCES:

On behalf of the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

GENE TRAGER
WILLIAM LAZARUS

Also Present:

Don Hammond
Lawrence Robertson

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. LAZARUS: It is March 29, 11:13 a.m. We are at
3 the Vogtle Plant interviewing Mr. George Schnieder and
4 Sandra Threatt from South Carolina, involving their
5 involvement, participation in the loss of vital power
6 incident at Vogtle on March 20.

7 Whereupon,

8 GEORGE SCHNIEDER
9 and
10 SANDRA THREATT
11

12 appeared as witnesses herein and testified as follows:

13 EXAMINATION

14 BY MR. LAZARUS:

15 Q George?

16 A (Witness Schnieder) I am George Schnieder. During
17 the accident on the 20th, I was the Operations Officer for
18 the Emergency Preparedness Division, State of South
19 Carolina, located in Columbia.

20 What I would like to do is introduce and leave with
21 you some documents that might be useful to you in developing
22 your recommendations.

23 I would like to leave copies of the Emergency
24 Notification, which we received from Plant Vogtle throughout
25 the whole accident.

26 I would also like to leave an operations journal,
27 which we kept both at the operations desk at the State

1 Emergency Operation Center and the county desk journals,
2 which were also kept at the State Emergency Operation
3 Center, and, lastly, a situation chart which we portrayed in
4 the Operation Center which was essentially--pictured the
5 events that were taking place i.. the plant and offsite so
6 that the participants in the Operation Center knew what was
7 going on throughout the whole time.

8 Essentially, those documents outlined the anatomy of
9 the response from South Carolina.

10 Q Thank you. Those documents will be appreciated.
11 Thank you.

12 A (Witness Schnieder) Just to talk through it, rather
13 generally, the Emergency Notification Network was fired up
14 at approximately 9:50 or 9:55 or 10:00 in the morning, I
15 don't have the exact time, when the plant notified offsite
16 and we have it documented here, Emergency Message #1, that
17 there was a site error emergency at Plant Vogtle.

18 Q Was that the primary Emergency Notification Network,
19 or the backup Emergency Notification Network?

20 A (Witness Schnieder) I believe it was the primary.
21 We have both an ENN and a backup ENN. I did not
22 pick up that phone, someone else actually picked up the
23 messages, but I believe it was the ENN.

24 Q Okay.

25 A (Witness Schnieder) Both phones are sitting side by

1 side.

2 Q Based on what we have found so far, it was the
3 backup ENN, because the ENN was powered by vital power which
4 was lost during the incident, so they had to notify South
5 Carolina on the backup.

6 A (Witness Schnieder) As I say, both phones are
7 sitting right next to each other.

8 Once that happened, our procedures are to
9 immediately contact the counties and they were three --
10 Allendale, Aiken, and Barnwell -- to insure that they in
11 fact had gotten the emergency message and they had.

12 With that, our procedures are to open up the
13 Operations Center, which we proceeded to do. We notified
14 the appropriate people, the Governor's office, the Chief of
15 the Bureau of Radiological Health, Mr. Hayward Shealy, and
16 we notified the Deputy Adjutant General, State of South
17 Carolina.

18 The Operation Center became operational
19 approximately 10 o'clock in the morning and we had
20 representatives of the Bureau of Radiological Health, the
21 Governor's Office, Law Enforcement, and the Emergency
22 Preparedness Division as the primary players in the
23 Operations Center.

24 We were in contact with the counties telephonically
25 and we could have been in contact with them with our local

1 government radio, but there was no need to do that.

2 Operationally, we opened for business and really had
3 no problems in the State Emergency Operations Center.

4 We got appropriate warning messages from the plant
5 without any real problem. The terminus for those messages
6 initially was the Highway Department Warning Point, which is
7 our Warning Point and in the State EOC, in addition to the
8 three counties.

9 As soon as we were operational in the EOC, we
10 dropped the Highway Warning Point off the system, so that it
11 wouldn't slow them down.

12 Once the Bureau of Radiological Health people
13 arrived, it is our procedure that we try to get contact with
14 the dose assessment people in the plant so there is a
15 commonality of rad health talking to dose assessment people.

16 The way we initially did that, I called on the
17 Administrative Decision Line and contacted the EOF, which is
18 the terminus for that system, and got the appropriate person
19 in EOF to hook in with the Bureau of Radiological Health
20 individual and subsequent to that, they developed another
21 means of communicating back and forth.

22 Q Do you know about what time that was that you made
23 that link up with EOF?

24 A (Witness Schnieder) About 10:45.

25 Q Now, does the state--

1 A (Witness Schnieder) Maybe even a little bit before
2 that.

3 WITNESS THREATT: Yes, it was. It was before that.

4 WITNESS SCHNIEDER: I guess about 10:35.

5 BY MR. LAZARUS:

6 Q Does South Carolina dispatch somebody to the EOF to
7 act as liaison?

8 A (Witness Schnieder) Negative, we did not do that.

9 Q Is that something you would normally do if you had
10 time?

11 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, normally we do send
12 somebody and normally it is the Bureau of Radiological
13 Health person.

14 Anyway, we became operational and were in contact.
15 The counties appeared to have no serious problems. Two of
16 the County Directors were not in the counties during this
17 accident. They were in Columbia at a seminar.

18 As best we can determine, the response was adequate
19 in both Barnwell and Allendale Counties, responding to the
20 accident.

21 In one county, Barnwell, the County Supervisor
22 actually opened up the EOC. In the other county, the County
23 Director was very complimentary of the people who were in
24 Allendale and responding, they were employees of his, and,
25 as I say, he was complimentary of their activities.

1 Q How many counties are involved in South Carolina?

2 A (Witness Schnieder) Three counties.

3 Q That is Barnwell, Allendale and--

4 A (Witness Schnieder) Aiken County.

5 Q Aiken.

6 A (Witness Schnieder) In Aiken County, the County
7 Director was there. He was just leaving for Columbia.

8 So communications from the South Carolina side were
9 all right, both the intercounty and state and the state to
10 the plant.

11 The procedure with Georgia and South Carolina, that
12 we coordinate virtually all of our actions, both Warning
13 System, Protective Action recommendations. We did not get
14 an initial call from GEMA. I tried to raise them on the
15 Administrative Decision line. We couldn't do that. This
16 was early on, and, finally, I did call telephonically to
17 GEMA in Atlanta and I discovered that they had not been
18 warned.

19 Q How did you initially try to reach them? You said
20 you tried to reach them telephonically?

21 A (Witness Schnieder) There is an Administrative
22 Decision line, a separate system, that hooks up the Georgia
23 Emergency Management Agency in Atlanta, the Director; the
24 Georgia FEOC in Waynesboro; the Director of EPD in
25 Columbia.

1 Q What was that, the Georgia PEOC?

2 A (Witness Schnieder) Forward Emergency Operation
3 Center. The South Carolina Emergency Operation Center in
4 Columbia, and the South Carolina Forward Emergency Operation
5 Center at the Graniteville Armory. There is a fifth drop,
6 and that is in the EOF at Plant Vogtle, and that is--they
7 call it the Administrative Decision line, and it is a
8 decision line, it is for the decision makers to coordinate
9 the appropriate response.

10 Q This is totally separate from the ENN?

11 A (Witness Schnieder) That is correct. It is a
12 totally discreet system.

13 Q Do you know if it operates in a similar manner with
14 just an open line?

15 A (Witness Schnieder) No, you can punch up numbers
16 and have a conference call.

17 I note trouble raising Plant Vogtle, I believe it
18 was the Plant Manager. I don't know, I got somebody.

19 Q But you had tried to punch up GEMA?

20 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, and once I did call them,
21 it became obvious that they had not--the individual I spoke
22 to said they were trying to sort out the communication with
23 the plant and that they were not actually warned.

24 Q You finally got hold of them on a regular commercial
25 telephone?

1 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, that's right. In fact, I
2 talked to the Communications Officer, Dick Airington, and
3 they were, he said, trying to energize the system and find
4 out what was going on.

5 Q Do you know about what time you made that contact?

6 A (Witness Schnieder) I would surmise 10:35,
7 thereabouts.

8 Q Yes, I think they show about 10:35. They got a copy
9 of a FAX from you and so it should be correct, that time.

10 A (Witness Schnieder) And we did FAX a copy of the
11 warning message to the GEMA, the exact time is kind of--so,
12 anyway, they got in business and there was no problem
13 subsequent to that, as far as I know.

14 The event was downgraded to an alert.

15 We were in the process in South Carolina, following
16 our procedures, when we fully activate the State Emergency
17 Center, we bring in quite a few other state agencies to
18 participate in the Operations Center.

19 As it was downgraded at that time, a decision was
20 made with your Radiological Health, Emergency Preparedness
21 Division and the Governor's Office to not bring in these
22 other agencies at that time, because it appeared that was
23 unnecessary. We had the Bureau of Radiological Health, the
24 Emergency Preparedness Division, the law enforcement people
25 and the Governor's Office there in the Operations Center and

1 had the capability of bringing in additional folks, but we
2 decided it was unnecessary at that time.

3 We were in continuous contact with the counties
4 throughout the remainder of the incident.

5 At the latter stages, we received a call from Mr.
6 Bockhold, the Plant Manager and had a conference call as he
7 discussed putting the plant back in a safe condition and
8 coordinated the termination of the alert, and then that was
9 formally done by issuing a Final Warning Form which went out
10 to all the counties in the state.

11 Throughout this period, we made the appropriate
12 notifications. We were concerned more with the
13 notification of the counties because they are the EPZ people
14 at risk. We didn't notify GEMA, John Heard appraised them
15 of the situation through his contact with Bob Trojanowski
16 with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, who asked if we had
17 sufficient information and if there was anything that we
18 would need, if we would identify that. I replied to him
19 that we were in pretty good shape and that we would see if
20 there was any problem that he could address.

21 A couple of things--are there any questions?

22 Q No, I think that covers the chronology pretty well.
23 If there is anything you want to flesh out, or any problem
24 areas you want to discuss, that's fine.

25 A (Witness Schnieder) Okay, internally, we really saw

1 no problems on our Operations Center and operations and
2 coordination of these different state agencies and with the
3 counties.

4 Externally, which is quite obvious, we did have
5 coordination problems with GEMA, because they obviously had
6 not been aware of what was going on, and as the state which
7 has the plant residing in it, they normally take the lead in
8 sounding the warning system over the radio and coordinating
9 the Emergency Broadcast System.

10 That is one of the purposes of that Administrative
11 Decision line, to coordinate that.

12 Q To back up again, you said Georgia takes the lead,
13 or did I understand that correctly?

14 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, they actually activate the
15 warning system.

16 Q For both South Carolina and Georgia?

17 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, that is part of it and
18 there is a written agreement that covers that.

19 Q Could you activate it from South Carolina, if
20 necessary?

21 A (Witness Schnieder) No. It is not really too
22 serious a problem, the reason being is that the people live
23 in Georgia. We have very few people living in the EPZ in
24 South Carolina, and, by and large, most of the warning
25 notification in addition to the NOA on the radio that are

1 there would be done by law enforcement people, Wildlife
2 people actually going out into the area to notify the
3 locals.

4 You have two major areas in South Carolina that are
5 in the Emergency Planning Zone. One in Aiken, where there
6 is the Cowden Plantation, a private plantation. Th is
7 used mostly for hunting and fishing and what have you. The
8 other area over in Barnwell is what they call the Treat
9 Plantation where it is, again, a private plantation, which
10 does have inhabitants, the people who run the plantation and
11 they can easily be warned, told to evacuate, or whatever
12 protective action recommendations that would be required,
13 and so our system is not as time sensitive or as severe as
14 Georgia is and they do have the system of activating over
15 the radio.

16 They also have the majority of the siren warnings in
17 Georgia. We have one. It is a non-problem.

18 Q A non-problem for South Carolina?

19 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, that's right. That's
20 really what I am addressing.

21 One other thing that happened which did cause a
22 problem is WBBQ came on the air and mentioned that there was
23 an accident at Plant Vogtle and there was evacuation going
24 on.

25 I don't have the transcript of what was said, but

1 the people who heard that, I have an idea heard the word
2 "evacuation, and most citizens don't go much further than
3 evacuation and they became quite concerned.

4 We had some people in the Operations Center in Aiken
5 County who actually heard this. Other citizens did call in
6 and ask should we evacuate, are we in serious trouble, and
7 what have you.

8 Q I take it this was obviously just a news story and
9 not an EBS message?

10 A (Witness Schnieder) No, it was not an EBS.

11 Q Does Georgia also take the lead in preparing the EBS
12 messages since they activate the order?

13 A (Witness Schnieder) They do that in coordination
14 with us, yes, they sure do.

15 So that posed somewhat of a problem to the local
16 populous because they were concerned and we got that fixed.

17 I called--when I heard that, I called GEMA and
18 talked with their operations officer and mentioned that we
19 had some citizens hear that and he said he would take the
20 appropriate action and get back to the plant people and find
21 out the source of what was taking place.

22 Q This was sometime after they became aware that there
23 was--

24 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, I can tell you when I
25 called.

1 (Brief pause.)

2 11:15, notified Bob Miles, GEMA Operations Center,
3 and he said he would work on that.

4 We had, in Jasper County, which is quite a ways from
5 the plant but within range of the radio, we had a County
6 Director call in and ask should he begin to evacuate his
7 county because he had heard that there was a real problem.
8 He was concerned. He is not in the Planning Zone or
9 anything of that nature, but he was just being responsive,
10 and so that posed a problem with the citizens and normally,
11 we would not have that problem. On exercises from
12 licensing up until today, we have always made that
13 coordination without any real problem.

14 Q When you are talking about coordination, you are
15 talking about coordination with South Carolina and Georgia
16 or coordination with the news media?

17 A (Witness Schnieder) South Carolina and Georgia and
18 the plant with them putting that information out to the
19 media and, as I say, that had not been a problem.

20 The coordination in the past, actually, really was
21 not a problem at all. The State of Georgia and the State of
22 South Carolina practice working together. We have got an
23 excellent working relationship and in previous exercises,
24 not only with Plant Vogtle but with the Savannah River Site,
25 which is the same basic type of coordination, we really

1 haven't had any problem. That has to do with our close
2 relationship with Georgia and the system that is in place
3 there, the communications that we have.

4 Q Do you know if the utility made any news releases?

5 A (Witness Schnieder) I don't know.

6 Q Would you normally be provided a copy of those
7 releases?

8 A (Witness Schnieder) Oh, yes, I am sorry. Yes, they
9 did make a news release.

10 Q I am just trying to determine whether the WBBQ news
11 story came from a plantless release?

12 A (Witness Schnieder) I don't--I have no earthly idea
13 how that happened. I would hope that in some way we can
14 find that out so that we can get it fixed.

15 Q I assume that most of the way they do that, news
16 stations have scanners and they pick something up on the
17 radio.

18 A (Witness Schnieder) But we did get copies of the
19 news release.

20 It will take South Carolina, let's just say that the
21 Joint Information Center does open it, it would take two
22 hours to get our Public Information people down here. That
23 is what it would take, maybe a little bit less, depending on
24 the intensity of the driving, and in the past, it really has
25 not been a problem.

1 That one got out, how it did, and I think it
2 appeared probably outside the information resources of the
3 plant or GEMA or South Carolina. I know it wasn't from
4 South Carolina, because our PIO person was right with me at
5 the time.

6 Those are the only things that I would mention that
7 were somewhat untoward.

8 Q Okay.

9 A (Witness Schnieder) We were, I think, very
10 fortunate and was a very positive effort on the state's part
11 and the county's part. They were very--I believe the three
12 counties, after talking with the County Directors, were very
13 comfortable. They thought that they could do the job and
14 could make sure that the people in their counties were not
15 upset.

16 Q They had enough information?

17 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes. The way that works, they
18 get warning messages as we do, but we have a county desk.
19 One of our personnel that is dedicated was talking directly
20 to each of the counties and they maintained communications
21 throughout the duration of the incident or accident.

22 We do that by commercial telephone. If that fails,
23 we have the local government radio which we maintain and
24 that is not a problem at all. That is really all I have.

25 Q Sandra, would you like to explain your involvement

1 and add anything to what has been covered?

2 A (Witness Threatt) Thank you. I am Sandra Threatt
3 with the Bureau of Radiological Health. I am the Emergency
4 Planning Coordinator and as George Schneider indicated, they
5 contacted the Hayes City Bureau Chief, and notified him of
6 the situation and made sure that we had received the
7 Emergency Notification Message and he had, and we discussed
8 it and dispatched someone to the State Operations Center to
9 represent us, and shortly after, I followed with one of my
10 staff to augment.

11 The only problem we had in the beginning, that I
12 think George alluded to a few moments ago, was that we had
13 to use the Administrative Decision line to get a telephone
14 number of a contact person for me to talk to. The
15 confidential telephone number that they had given us was
16 directly into the Control Room and, of course, everyone was
17 busy at the time in the Control Room and they had activated,
18 in the meantime had activated the TOC and so George did get
19 us a telephone number and once we got that number, which was
20 only a matter of a few minutes, things went along smoothly.

21 After we had gotten the complete plant status, then
22 I contacted John Hurt to make sure that he had been notified
23 and then also H. B. Warren at DOE, to make sure they had
24 been apprised of the situation, and they were.

25 We were kept fairly busy, talking back and forth

1 with the plant, trying to ascertain exactly what had
2 happened, what the implications were at the time.

3 Q Did you have a pretty clear of what the situation
4 was?

5 A (Witness Schnieder) Yes, we did. The gentleman
6 that was helping us, Doug Daughhetee D-a-u-g-h-h-e-t-e-e,
7 was extremely helpful in providing me with the information
8 that I needed to inform George Schnieder what was going on
9 at the plant.

10 As George has already said, when we got the message
11 about that from WBBQ, I called the TSC Communicator back and
12 said please tell me what type, if any, evacuation has
13 occurred, and he explained to me that the evacuation was of
14 non-essential personnel to the parking area for a head count
15 and that he also didn't understand how this had gotten out
16 but he wanted to see if we could confirm it with area EPD,
17 Emergency Preparedness, and if we could, to give him a call
18 back, and so I talked with George and they did confirm it,
19 and I called him back and he gave me a telephone number for
20 Birmingham, Alabama corporate and someone in general
21 operations that I could talk to about it to see if they
22 were doing anything, putting out press releases or anything.

23 And, in the meantime, we had also asked for our
24 Public Information Officer to come over from our district in
25 the event we needed someone to, you know, EPD and he and the

1 Emergency Preparedness Division PIO got together and talked
2 to these folks on the phone and they got the FAX sent to us
3 and we just continued on with our decision making, taking
4 messages and providing assistance to EPD throughout the
5 event until it was closed out.

6 From our part, we got all the information we needed,
7 technically, to provide, we think, any assistance, or
8 recommendations and that is pretty much all I have to add.
9 Do you have any questions.

10 MR. LAZARUS: No, if you don't have any particular
11 problem areas, I think that was a pretty clear picture of
12 the response of South Carolina.

13 Anything else?

14 WITNESS SCHNIEDER: Could I add one thing that I
15 overlooked?

16 During the emergency, Mr. Jim Roberts, from Plant
17 Vogtle, who was at that conference in Columbia, called me
18 and asked me in Columbia if there was anything that he could
19 do or could get or could contact the plant to give us
20 additional information or whatever support we might need and
21 I told him that, no, there was no requirement to do that,
22 but I appreciated his interest and his offer of support.

23 MR. LAZARUS: We can go off the record.

24 (Discussion off the record.)

25 MR. LAZARUS: We are back on the record with George

1 Schnieder and Sandra Threatt. While we were off the
2 record, we were discussing the ability to activate the
3 Public Emergency Alerting System.

4 George, would you like to clarify what that
5 situation is?

6 WITNESS SCHNEIDER: Yes, that the--in South
7 Carolina, there is but one siren and it is located in
8 Barnwell County, and the capability of sounding that siren
9 is within the State of South Carolina and, in fact, within
10 Barnwell County and we have the capability of firing that at
11 the appropriate time, and that--

12 MR. LAZARUS: But Georgia activates all of the
13 sirens in Georgia and South Carolina activates the one siren
14 that they have?

15 WITNESS SCHNEIDER: That is correct, and, normally,
16 it is done on a coordinated basis.

17 MR. LAZARUS: Okay. Thank you very much.
18 We will go off the record.

19 (Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the interview was
20 concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the attached proceedings before the
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the matter of:

Interview of: GEORGE SCHNIEDER
AND
SANDRA THREATT

Place: Vogtle Nuclear Generating Plant, Waynesboro, GA

Date: March 29, 1990

were held as herein appears, and that this is the original
transcript thereof for the file of the United States Nuclear
Regulatory Commission taken stenographically by me and,
thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under my
direction, and that the transcript is a true and accurate
record of the foregoing proceedings.

ROSE ARNOLD
Official Reporter

Ann Riley & Associates