

MR. MYERS: Perhaps more significant than the individual allegations was the description of an industry where, as pointed out by a study by Northeast Utilities, "38% of employees do not trust their management enough to willingly raise concerns because of a 'shoot the messenger' mentality." The NRC has announced yet another whistleblower study. This is not a new issue, but it is a critical, potentially dangerous problem. What improvements can we make this year to address this very troubling problem?

CHAIRMAN JACKSON:

The NRC has an active program for following up on allegations. The information that industry employees provide to supplement NRC oversight function is important to our defense-in-depth approach to nuclear safety. NRC values greatly the contributions of so-called "whistleblowers," and has so stated on a number of occasions, including in "Reassessment of the NRC program for Protection of Allegers Against Retaliation," (NUREG-1499). The reassessment resulted in 47 recommendations for improving the NRC's allegation process.

Currently, the NRC has completed staff action on 24 of the 47 recommendations. Another 5 recommendations have been implemented through interim guidance. On March 14, 1996, the staff forwarded to the Commission for approval a final policy statement, "Freedom of Employees in the Nuclear Industry to Raise Safety and Compliance Concerns Without Fear of Retaliation." This policy statement informs the industry of the Commission's expectations for creating and maintaining an environment in which industry employees can raise safety and compliance concerns without fear of retaliation. Upon Commission approval, the staff will have implemented another 5 recommendations.

We plan to take an integrated look at the problems of selected whistleblowers at Millstone Station. NRC has assigned a senior manager to oversee a group of

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staff to study the 10-year history of the licensee's handling of employee concerns and of the NRC's handling of allegations related to licensed activities at Millstone station. Studies of selected cases are in progress to identify root causes, common patterns between cases, and lessons learned from the experiences of whistleblowers at Millstone station that caused them to lose confidence in both the licensee and the NRC. These lessons will be used to determine what further improvement can be made in our process.