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COMANCHE PEAK HEARING RESUMES; ATCHISON CLAIMS PLOT

The Comanche Peak licensing hearing resumed Monday in Fort Worth with return engagements by several intervenor witnesses and the start of rebuttal testimony by the company.

The hearing, before an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, began with resumption of testimony concerning the quality assurance program at the plant.

Testimony on quality assurance started during the June hearing session and continued in July. Developments involving witnesses for the intervenor - Citizens Association for Sound Energy - Monday included:

- Disclosure by former welding inspector Charles Atchison that a Department of Labor Investigation has resulted in an order to reinstate him in a job at a Louisiana nuclear project - a job from which he was fired after the hearing session in July.
- A new claim by Atchison that he is the victim of "muck-raking," "discrimination," "financial duress" and other "devious deeds" by Texas Utilities, Brown & Root and companies involved with the Louisiana project.
- Cross-examination of a former employee, Henry Stiner, and his wife, Darlene, presently a quality control inspector at the plant, about allegations they've made concerning welding and the adequacy of NRC investigations.
- Brief appearances by two other former employees - Mark Walsh and Jack Doyle - who have made allegations concerning use of computer programs to analyze the strength of pipes and pipe supports.

Atchison was hired by a subcontractor at the Waterford III nuclear plant, being built by Louisiana Power & Light, at the same time the last hearing session in July began. He was fired after he returned to Louisiana from the hearing.

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TU attorney Nick Reynolds also touched briefly on a finding in a Department of Labor investigation that Atchison had been discriminated against when he was fired from a job at a Louisiana nuclear project.

Among reasons the Department of Labor gave for ruling that Atchison should be reinstated was the fact that some Comanche Peak employees - including Brandt - once worked at the Louisiana project and some Louisiana employees now work at Comanche Peak.

Reynolds established that Atchison himself had told the investigator that Brandt once had worked at the Louisiana plant. After Tuesday's session, Brandt said he not only had never discussed Atchison with anyone at the Louisiana project, but had never even been contacted by the Labor Department investigator.

"It is noteworthy to point out," said TUGCO QA manager Dave Chapman after the session, "that during these proceedings we've been hearing from a few individuals, most of whom are disgruntled and misguided former employees. Not a single safety issue has been identified by any of them."

"For every one of these people, I can identify a hundred capable, hard-working, credible employees who are doing good quality assurance jobs every day at Comanche Peak," he said.

Also testifying Tuesday was a former employee in the pipe support stress analysis area at the plant, Jack Doyle. Doyle admitted that, until he talked to plant experts while giving his disposition for the hearing a month ago, he had not been aware that his group did not have the final word concerning pipe support safety.

He admitted he had not known that a series of reviews are done - including the final stress analysis - to make sure the pipe supports are safe.

A panel of witnesses for the company began testimony late Tuesday to refute the testimony of Doyle and one of his co-workers, Mark Walsh. The panel will continue Wednesday.

Mrs. Ellis said at least three people will appear when the session begins Wednesday to make "limited appearance" statements opposing Comanche Peak.