

notes

From: F. Paul Bonnett
To: KAD
Date: 2/5/98 8:38am
Subject: Status Ltrs for A-97-0145 (SSES)

Kathy,

What is the status of the status letters updating the status of the allegation to the allegers? (this is like writing "Dilbert" or something).

Paul

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
475 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-1415

February 4, 1998

Mr. Robert G. Byram
Senior Vice President - Nuclear
Pennsylvania Power & Light Company
2 North Ninth Street
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18101

SUBJECT: NRC INTEGRATED INSPECTION REPORT 50-387/97-10, 50-388/97-10

Dear Mr. Byram:

On January 19, 1998, the NRC completed an inspection at your Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (SSES) 1 & 2 reactor facilities. The enclosed report presents the results of that inspection. The inspectors discussed the findings of this inspection with Mr. G. Jones, Vice President Nuclear Operations, Mr. G. Kuczynski, General Manager SSES, and others of your staff, at the exit meeting on January 21, 1998.

During the 6-week period covered by this inspection report, your conduct of activities was characterized by safe operation and generally conservative decision making. The physical security inspection concluded that you conducted adequate fitness for duty and access authorization programs, with some minor problems.

Several issues identified during this inspection are of concern. In response to NRC inspection findings, you issued a licensee event report that reported the potential loss of a Unit 1 standby liquid control system safety function for up to 75 days. The maximum time allowed by technical specifications (TSs) for this condition is 8 hours. As discussed at the exit meeting, we understand that you are re-evaluating this issue and we request you complete this evaluation within 20 days. This information will be used to evaluate the unresolved item identified in the enclosed inspection report and to determine whether further NRC action is required.

Your actions in response to a failure of the Unit 2 rod block monitor were observed and, in general, were considered conservative and safety oriented. However, SSES management chose to enter TS 3.0.3 and did not initiate any action to shutdown the unit, as is intended by the technical specification. The NRC questioned the appropriateness of the decision to enter TS 3.0.3 and considered managements decision to intentionally not reduce power a weakness in implementation of the TS. We request the SSES Plant Operation Review Committee formally evaluate the issue to enter TS 3.0.3 within 20 days. This information will be used to evaluate the unresolved item identified in the enclosed inspection report and to determine whether further NRC action is required.

The NRC considers the issues identified by your independent safety engineering group, in its fall 1997 audit of Operations, to be significant. Your initial efforts in response to these issues are viewed as reasonable first steps at corrective action. The effectiveness of your corrective actions will be reviewed in future inspections.

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Mr. Robert G. Byram

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In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter and its enclosures will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room (PDR).

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:

Clifford J. Anderson, Chief
Projects Branch No. 4
Division of Reactor Projects

Docket Nos.: 50-387;50-388
License Nos: NPF-14, NPF-22

Enclosures:

1. Inspection Report 50-387/97-10, 50-388/97-10

cc w/encl:

G. T. Jones, Vice President - Nuclear Operations
G. Kuczynski, General Manager
J. M. Kenny, Supervisor, Nuclear Licensing
G. D. Miller, General Manager - Nuclear Engineering
R. R. Wehry, Nuclear Licensing
P. Ray, Nuclear Services Manager, General Electric
C. D. Lopes, Manager - Nuclear Security
A. Male, Manager, Nuclear Assessment Services
H. D. Woodeshick, Special Assistant to the President
J. C. Tilton, III, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

REGION I

Docket Nos: 50-387, 50-388
License Nos: NPF-14, NPF-22

Report No. 50-387/97-10, 50-388/97-10

Licensee: Pennsylvania Power and Light Company
2 North Ninth Street
Allentown, Pennsylvania 19101

Facility: Susquehanna Steam Electric Station

Location: P.O. Box 35
Berwick, PA 18603-0035

Dates: December 9, 1997 through January 19, 1998

Inspectors: K. Jenison, Senior Resident Inspector
B. McDermott, Resident Inspector
J. Richmond, Resident Inspector
G. Smith, Senior Security Specialist

Approved by: Clifford Anderson, Chief
Projects Branch 4
Division of Reactor Projects

O4 Operator Knowledge and Performance

O4.1 Environmental Factors and Operator Performance

a. Inspection Scope (71707)

Various PP&L internal reports have indicated that environmental factors have created a stressful working relationship between Operations personnel and management. The inspectors reviewed these documents and conducted interviews to evaluate PCO and Nuclear Plant Operator (NPO) performance. The inspector reviewed an Independent Safety Engineering Group (ISEG) report, dated December 19, 1997, a sample of Nuclear Assessment Services (NAS) surveillances, and a letter from the Operations Manager to a distribution list, dated December 31, 1997. The inspector discussed these issues with SSES Management, the ISEG Supervisor, the NAS surveillance group supervisor and selected auditors, and various representative from the Operations Department. Further, the inspector observed a sample of operator activities.

b. Observations and Findings

Observations

The ISEG report indicated that the quality of in-plant watch standing was improved and that in-plant evolutions were well done. However, the relationship between Operations Department Management and the rank and file of the Operations Section needed to be improved. The NAS surveillances noted effective communications and operator work performance. Yet some weaknesses in the scheduling of plant activities cause a conflict and impact on PCO ability to complete some activities. The inspector determined that operator activities were in general being well performed, but that there were organizational environmental factors which posed challenges to SSES management.

During the observation of NPOs and PCOs, the inspectors found the assigned activities to be currently performed in a professional, aggressive and effective manner. Operators were able to describe the activity they were performing, the impact on other plant equipment, and appropriate PP&L controls and procedures applicable to the performed activity. However, the inspector discerned a concern on the part of the NPOs and PCOs that managements expectations were not always clear and often affected the performance of operator's activities.

The inspectors observed US, AUS, and STA activities, which included a plant inspection, interfacing with control room staff, and providing direct supervision of the NPO and ASO shift staff. Adequate technical direction was observed to be provided to the NPOs and ASOs by the supervisors. Communications between the supervisors and the SS, STA, and the NPOs and ASOs were clear and concise. Conduct of the supervisors appeared professional and appropriate. The inspectors discussed separately management expectations for operator performance and the lines of communications between the operators and plant management with the supervisors. The supervisors were confident the NPOs and ASOs clearly understood their expectations and stated the work performance of the NPOs and ASOs satisfied their expectations. The supervisors felt they clearly understood the expectations of their direct supervisor, the SS, and believed they met those expectations. However, the supervisor's felt the organizational environment and the lines of communications between the shift operators and management needed improvement.

The inspector discussed his observations with the Site Vice President, General Manager SSES, and Manager of Operations. During one conversation, the job performance functions issues and the ISEG report were discussed specifically. PP&L is working to resolve issues involving the PCO, NPO and ASO job performance associated functions through a bargaining unit negotiation process. The ISEG report is being addressed through normal management actions much the same way that a cultural survey was resolved in 1997. Operations management was observed to be sensitive to the need for a quick resolution of operator related issues and continues to communicate a safety oriented approach to the operation of the units. PP&L management stated that they are expending considerable resources trying to resolve these issues but do not find that the issues are affecting the safety of the units.

Findings

In general, the inspectors found the operations department personnel to be well aware of plant activities, their individual performance, and the overall condition of their assigned units. The US were very able to describe their actions, direct the actions of the PCO, research the resolution of technical issues using the tools available to them in the control room, and control the release of work authorizations.

The inspectors were able to verify the conclusions made by the ISEG and the NAS concerning present operator performance. Through conversations with SSES workers the inspectors were also able to verify some individuals felt the need to improve specific organizational environmental factors, including communications between management and workers. SSES Management is establishing general approaches to the resolution of identified organizational environmental factors including bargaining unit negotiation, PP&L leadership training, increased communications between management and workers, PP&L human resources programs, PP&L employee concerns program initiatives in supervision, Operator Department Focus Group activities, and responses to the findings from the 1997 cultural survey and ISEG report. The inspectors concluded that organizational environmental factors were determined to have no current visible impact on the safe operation of the plant.

c. Conclusions

Operator performance was reviewed by direct observations, interviews, and evaluations of PP&L self assessments. The inspectors verified the weaknesses, identified by the PP&L self assessments, that were described as environmental factors. Despite the weaknesses, the inspectors verified current operator performance was very good. PP&L management is establishing general approaches to resolve these weaknesses. The identified weaknesses currently have no apparent impact on the safe operation of SSES.