



February 9, 1998

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555

Re: Reportable Occurrence: Violation of Tech Spec 6.1.3.a
License No. R-2, Docket No. 50-005

Dear Sir or Madame:

In accordance with Tech Spec 6.6.2, this letter is to confirm verbal reports of a reportable occurrence at the Pennsylvania State University Breazeale Nuclear Reactor on February 9, 1998. The verbal reports were provided to Tom Dragoun, Region I, and Richard Dudley, NRC Headquarters, at approximately 0935 hours on February 9, 1998. A violation of Tech Spec 6.1.3.a(1) occurred when the control room was unoccupied by a licensed operator for about five seconds while the reactor was not secured. Tech Spec 6.1.3.a states that "The minimum staffing level when the reactor is not secured shall be: (1) A licensed operator present in the control room, in accordance with applicable regulations."

The duty senior operator was conducting normal Monday morning critical rod positions with an operator trainee at the controls. The reactor power had been steady for several minutes at 50 watts in automatic mode of operation and the trainee was recording hourly readings. A second senior operator entered the control room to gather some information from the trainee concerning his type of dosimetry. At that point the duty senior operator asked the second senior operator to stand with the trainee while he stepped 20 feet outside the control room to change an air monitor filter paper. The second senior operator then concluded the brief conversation with the trainee and walked out of the control room, leaving the trainee alone at the controls. The duty senior operator was returning to the control room as the second senior operator was leaving; the elapsed time of the violation is estimated to be about five seconds.

The duty senior operator paged the second senior operator to the control room to tell him of his error (the second senior operator had just realized the error and was already on the way back to the control room). The second senior operator realized he had committed a Tech Specs violation and reported the incident to the facility Director. The second senior operator fully understood the requirements of Tech Spec 6.1.3.a(1).

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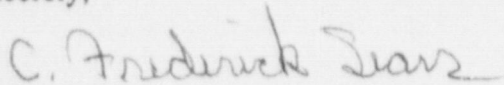


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The Director interviewed the three individuals involved and concluded there were two fundamental issues: 1) there was not a formal turnover between the two senior operators, and 2) there was inattention on the part of the second senior operator. The individuals will be counseled and the overall turnover process will be reviewed and strengthened.

A written 14-day report will be submitted by February 23, 1998.

Sincerely,



C. Frederick Sears
Director, Radiation Science
and Engineering Center

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pc: M. Mendoca (NRC Headquarters)
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