



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

February 22, 1989

The Honorable J. James Exon
United States Senator
287 Federal Building
100 Centennial Mall North
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

Dear Senator Exon:

Your constituent, Mr. Jeffrey Boyd, inquired about an amendment that we have recently proposed to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's regulations. This proposed amendment is entitled, "Education and Experience Requirements for Senior Reactor Operators and Supervisors at Nuclear Power Plants" and it contains two alternatives. Both alternatives are intended to upgrade the operating, engineering, and accident management expertise provided on-shift at nuclear power plants. This upgrade is expected to enhance the capability of the operating staff to respond to potential accident situations and to effectively restore the reactor to a safe and stable condition. These alternatives are explained in a bit more detail below and a copy of the Federal Register Notice on this proposal is enclosed for additional information.

The first alternative would apply to senior reactor operators. It would require that each applicant for a senior reactor operator license have a bachelor's degree in engineering, engineering technology, or the physical sciences from an accredited college or university. The first alternative would achieve our objective of upgrading by combining engineering expertise and operating experience in the senior reactor operator position.

The second alternative would apply to persons who have supervisory responsibilities, such as shift supervisors or senior managers. It would require that they have enhanced educational credentials and experience over that which is normally required for senior reactor operators. The desired educational credentials are: a bachelor's degree from a program accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology; a professional engineer license issued by a state government; or a bachelor's degree and an Engineer-in-Training certificate that indicates one has passed a state administered examination. The second alternative would achieve our objective of upgrading by combining engineering expertise and operating experience in the shift supervisor position.

The second alternative does not currently apply to the position held by your constituent, Mr. Boyd. Even if the first alternative were selected for final promulgation, your constituent would be exempt (grandfathered) from the degree requirement if he maintains his senior reactor operator license. The first alternative would become effective four years after final rule promulgation. The exemption applies to persons who hold a senior reactor operator license on the date four years after final rule promulgation. This exemption would ensure that the experience of the current senior reactor operators is retained. Delaying the implementation of the first alternative by four years allows time for those reactor operators who want to become senior reactor operators to take the necessary examination and complete all requirements for the senior reactor operator license.

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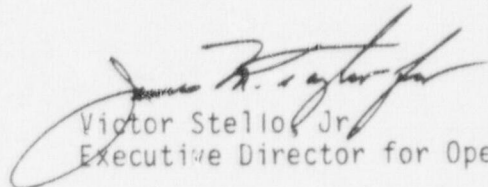
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Concurrently with the amended final rule on this matter, the Commission intends to publish a policy statement which encourages nuclear power plant licensees to:

- 1) implement personnel policies that emphasize the opportunities for licensed senior reactor operators to assume positions of increased management responsibility;
- 2) develop programs that would enable currently licensed senior reactor operators, reactor operators, and shift supervisors to obtain college degrees; and
- 3) obtain college credit for appropriate nuclear power plant training and work experience through arrangements with the academic sector.

Finally, I would emphasize that the concerns of your constituent, Mr. Boyd, will be considered during our analysis of the public comments received on this matter. I trust that the above information is responsive to your request.

Sincerely,



Victor Stello, Jr.
Executive Director for Operations

Enclosure:
Federal Register notice