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Subject: URGENT ACTION ALERT FROM UCS

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DOCKETED
USNRC

DEC 8 P4:19

***** UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS ACTION ALERT *****

TELL NRC TO PROTECT AMERICANS FROM FATIGUED NUCLEAR WORKERS AFRAID TO VOICE SAFETY CONCERNS

OFFICE
FILE
ADJUTANT

THE ISSUES:

A nuclear power plant accident can hurt thousands of people and cause long-lasting harm to the environment. The workers at these plants are the first line of defense against such a disaster. The workers test and inspect safety equipment and follow emergency procedures when equipment malfunctions to lessen the consequences of an accident. In the next few months, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will reach decisions on two proposed rules intended to make sure that nuclear workers are an effective line of defense.

DOCKET NUMBER
PETITION RULE PRM 26-2
(64FR67202)

PLEASE SUPPORT
THESE TWO
PROPOSED RULES

* Proposed Rule #1 - Establish limits on employee working hours at nuclear power plants:

This rule will make the NRC guard against human performance degradation from fatigue just as it has done for drug and alcohol use since the mid 1980s. With the onset of electric utility restructuring, nuclear power plant owners face pressure to slash operating costs, forcing plant owners to reduce staffing levels. The remaining staff members must work longer and longer hours. Numerous studies have concluded that fatigue impairs human performance. Human performance problems contributed to the nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. Despite this evidence, the NRC has no regulations against excessive overtime and frequently looks the other way when plant owners abuse the agency's overtime guidelines.

* Proposed Rule #2 - Training on employee protection regulations to supervisors, managers, and directors: The second proposed rule will protect nuclear "whistleblowers" - the plant workers who conscientiously raise safety concerns. The NRC's regulations are supposed to protect these workers from harassment and intimidation. Unfortunately, the agency consistently fails to enforce these regulations based on the flimsy rationale that the individuals who fire and discriminate against whistleblowers don't know that these actions are illegal. The rule removes this "ignorance of the law" excuse by requiring nuclear plant owners to train supervisors and managers on the employee protection regulations.

ACTION:

Please write the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and tell them to support both proposed rules to ensure that the first line of defense is staffed by workers who are free from both fatigue and fear of illegal

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12/2/99 5:20 PM



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PRM PRM 26-2 64FR67202