

December 4, 1999

Secretary of the Commission  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

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

'99 DEC -7 P3:12

Subject: TO PROTECT AMERICANS FROM FATIGUED NUCLEAR  
WORKERS AFRAID TO VOICE SAFETY CONCERNS

Sirs:

I have just heard from the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) concerning fatigued nuclear workers and workers who are afraid to report safety conditions at nuclear power plants. They are concerned about this and so am I

In order to eliminate these concerns the UCS has proposed two 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: (my addition: with specific emphasis that harrasing, itimidating, and firing employees who raise concerns is illegal and "ignorance of the law" is not an excuse.)

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.

My impression of the NRC is that, in the past, it has consistently put the welfare of the power plant ahead of the welfare of the American public. I would be very pleased if this impression were changed by appropriate actions of the NRC. One such action is the adoption of the two rules proposed by the UCS.

Please note that the UCS is NOT some fly-by-night pressure organization, but is made up of reputable scientists who are rightfully concerned about the welfare of the USA, and the world for that matter. They deserve to be heard with more justification than many other organizations.

Wilbur R. DeHart  
6969 Madden Rd.  
Dexter, MI 48130

Phone (734) 475-8308  
e-mail: lilnwil@juno.com