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The best of Sweden...in English

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December 6, 1999

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD

In re: Proposed Rules published in Federal Register
October 27, 1999 and December 1, 1999
for Limits on Nuclear Workers Overtime and
for Whistleblower Protection

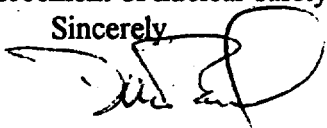
Dear Sirs:

It was with deep concern that I learned that your rules limiting the overtime of workers at nuclear plants only apply when the plants are running. The fatigue of such workers is a potential cause of mistakes that are an even greater threat to public safety than any mistake that could be made by, for example, the crew who maintain jet aircraft. Several hundred people died in the crash that resulted from the recent Value Jet negligence, but the lives of millions and the desolation of huge areas for a millennium to come are at risk when an over-tired nuclear worker makes a mistake, and such mistakes are as much a threat when, for example, refueling closed nuclear plants as when such a plant is in operation. Therefore I strongly urge you to accept the proposed rule establishing **limits on all employee working hours, and specifically forbidding excessive overtime, with substantial penalties against plant owners for violations.**

I was equally concerned to learn that, in distinction from all other legal proceedings, "ignorance of the law" is a sufficient defense against NRC's current regulations meant to protect those nuclear workers who step forward to raise safety concerns from harassment and intimidation. Thus no action can be taken against individuals harassing and intimidating such "whistleblowers" unless the NRC can prove that these individuals knew their actions were illegal. The remedy for this is to make training in employee protection regulations an absolute requirement for all nuclear industry supervisors, managers and directors. It will then be unnecessary to accept ignorance of the regulations as any excuse, and the enforcement of these vital regulations and the vital protection of those brave persons who call attention to deficiencies in nuclear operations will be enforced with vigor. I urge you to institute a requirement that all these persons be trained in the rights of all employees to blow the whistle on safety threats.

You know that the penalties for American society are simply too huge for laxity in nuclear plant operation to be tolerated. These newly proposed rules close gaps in the enforcement of nuclear safety, and I hope you will swiftly accept and enforce them..

Sincerely



David Mel Paul

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