

December 1, 2000

Mr. David A. Lochbaum
Nuclear Safety Engineer
Union of Concerned Scientists
1616 P Street NW Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036-1495

SUBJECT: INCIDENT AT THE SALEM NUCLEAR STATION

Dear Mr. Lochbaum:

This letter is in response to your November 8, 2000, electronic mail (email) letter to David Vito of this office. In your email message you indicated that an incident occurred at the Salem and Hope Creek site in which an NRC licensed operator had purportedly left the site suddenly due to a dispute with his management involving uncompensated overtime, among other issues. You suggested that we "should investigate this matter and determine what happened and why."

We agree that the incident in question did occur, i.e., the individual left the site after widely distributing the email, which raised issues regarding working conditions and expectations for senior reactor operators (SROs). The resident inspectors had been informed of this incident by PSEG Nuclear's management shortly after it occurred.

Based on a limited evaluation of the incident, we have determined that the individual was part of Salem's on shift operating crew, was not an NRC-licensed operator, and was in training to apply for an SRO license at Salem. Also, the individual later elected to resign from PSEG Nuclear. While the individual was apparently expected to work a number of hours without compensation, there is no indication that the individual approached or exceeded the overtime guidelines prescribed in the NRC policy statement on working hours (Generic Letter No. 82-12). Based on voice mail messages exchanged between you and Richard Barkley of my staff, it is our understanding that you were not provided any additional information that would indicate the overtime worked by the individual in question was in excess of the guidelines in Generic Letter 82-12.

As to the broader issue of "what happened and why," we believe the other issues raised are beyond the NRC regulations. While the working environment of licensed operators could affect their actions to properly and safely operate the reactor, it is those actions which our inspectors evaluate and not the overly subjective assessment of their working environment. As such we do not plan any additional actions regarding this incident.

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Should you have any further questions or concerns related to this issue, please contact Richard Barkley of my staff at 610/337-5065.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Glenn W. Meyer, Chief
Projects Branch 3
Division of Reactor Projects

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