

July 17, 1997

SECY 97-150

For: The Commissioners
From: James L. Blaha, Assistant for Operations, Office of the
EDO
Subject: WEEKLY INFORMATION REPORT - WEEK ENDING JULY 11, 1997

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*No input this week.

James L. Blaha
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Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
Items of Interest

Week Ending July 11, 1997

Region III Quarterly Operations Training Conference

On July 8, 1997, a member of the Operator Licensing Branch (HOLB) staff, made a presentation at the quarterly training conference conducted by the Region III Operations Training Supervisors in Green Bay, WI. The Kewaunee Nuclear Plant served as the host organization. The presentation concerned interim Revision 8 of NUREG-1021, "Operator Licensing Examination Standards for Power Reactors," which has been revised to permit power reactor facility licensees to prepare the operator licensing examinations. The Region III Operator Licensing Branch Chief, also attended the conference and participated in the presentation and open question session.

Davis Besse Initial Examination Audit

During the week of July 7, 1997, an HOLB examiner audited the initial operator licensing examinations conducted by Region III at the Davis Besse facility. The audit, which was performed in accordance with HOLB Manual Chapter 320, "HOLB Program Review of Operator Licensing Functions at Licensee Facilities," is part of HOLB's continuing effort to collect feedback on the NRC's examination program and to oversee Regional examination activities.

Maintenance Rule Baseline Inspections at Diablo Canyon and Beaver Valley

Maintenance rule baseline inspections were conducted during the week of July 7-11, 1997 at the Diablo Canyon and Beaver Valley facilities.

Tritium Producing Burnable Absorber Rod (TPBAR) Inspection

Members of the Quality Assurance and Maintenance Branch were at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) from July 7 - 11, 1997 to inspect the quality assurance program and procedural controls associated with the tritium producing burnable absorber rod design and fabrication. This is a continuation of the Special Inspection Branch led inspection that was conducted April 28 - May 2, 1997. The lead assemblies are scheduled to be installed in the Watts Bar core.

Maine Yankee

During the week of July 14, 1997, Mr. Corbin McNeill, President and CEO of PECO Energy, will visit the Maine Yankee site and meet with local government officials. PECO is considering the purchase of the Maine Yankee power plant that includes an arrangement with existing MYAPCO, Entergy, and Yankee Atomic staff. PECO's Board of Directors is scheduled to meet on July 28 to decide whether to pursue the purchase of Maine Yankee.

The Maine Yankee Operations Stand Down Order remains in effect. The Order was issued on June 30, 1997 by the licensee's Vice President, Operations, in response to valve lineup errors on June 26 and 28, 1997. The latter event resulted in inadvertent draining of 10,000 gallons of water from the reactor cavity to the reactor water storage tank. The reactor cavity was fully offloaded to and isolated from the spent fuel pool at the time. The licensee is conducting a review to determine the root cause of these events and to develop a corrective action plan. Approval of the Plant Operations Review Committee is required to lift the Order.

Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3

On June 20, 1997, a test of the ability of the Lee Gas Turbine Station to supply power to an Oconee emergency electrical bus was being conducted. Due to an operator error at the Lee Station, Keowee Units 1 and 2, which serve as the standby electrical power supply for the Oconee Station, received an automatic start signal. Keowee Unit 2 started as expected, but Keowee Unit 1 was unable to provide power to the Oconee Unit 1 emergency bus due to a blown fuse in the generator field flashing circuit. The cause of the blown fuse is under investigation and may be age-related. The fuse was replaced and Keowee Unit 1 was successfully tested. The licensee has committed, as a short-term action, to replace the fuse each time a Keowee unit receives an emergency start signal. The long-term resolution is under investigation.

On June 23, 1997, following a test of the Lee Gas Turbine Station to supply power to Oconee Unit 1, a sequence of events resulted in power being lost to the Keowee Unit 1 auxiliaries switchgear. This was caused by both

parallel breakers, which supply power to different buses of the Oconee switchyard, opening due to an interlock that is designed to prevent closing both breakers at the same time. In addition, the fuses blew in the breaker closing coil DC control power circuit because the breakers opened before the time delay in the anti-pump circuit could time out, due to a timer malfunction. Following repairs and investigations, both Keowee units have been declared operable but degraded. The licensee is investigating the causes of the problems and determining long-range actions. An Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) investigation is underway to investigate both the June 20 and 23 events. The AIT held an exit meeting on July 10, 1997.

On July 6, 1997, Oconee Unit 2 received an automatic turbine/reactor trip signal while at full power due to a disturbance on the electrical grid. All systems responded as expected. The grid disturbance originated at the Jocassee Pumped Storage Station, which has a direct tie line to the Oconee 230kv switchyard. With the 4 pumps/turbines in the pumping mode, personnel at the Jocassee Station attempted to switch auxiliary loads, which is an unusual evolution that was performed without informing the Oconee operators. The switching evolution failed (reason as yet unknown), causing two of the Jocassee units to trip, creating an undervoltage condition on the grid, and a trip of Oconee Unit 2. Oconee Unit 1, operating at 70 percent power, and Unit 3, operating at 95 percent power, were not significantly affected. The cause of the Oconee Unit 2 trip has been determined to be related to the gain setting of amplifiers in the generator voltage regulator, which prevented normal response of the generator to the sudden load increase. The gain settings have been corrected and the unit was restarted on July 7, 1997, and is operating at full power. The licensee is still investigating the cause of the Jocassee units trips.

Office of Nuclear Material
Safety and Safeguards

Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Westinghouse Transportation Cask Application

On July 2, 1997, the NRC sent a letter to Westinghouse rejecting their WESFLEX spent fuel transportation cask application based on the NRC staff determination that the application lacked sufficient technical information to

provide a basis to review the WESFLEX design for compliance with 10 CFR Part

71. The NRC letter included an enclosure with sample deficiencies. In addition, Westinghouse had designated the entire application "proprietary,"

yet the NRC staff determined that the application contained data available in

the public domain. Therefore, the NRC staff has denied the Westinghouse request for a proprietary determination, rejected the application, and is in

the process of returning the application.

Falls City, Texas, Uranium Mill Tailings Site

On July 8, 1997, the NRC accepted the Department of Energy (DOE) Long-Term

Surveillance Plan for the Falls City, Texas, site, placing DOE under general

license as specified in 10 CFR Part 40.27. This step follows resolution of

comments, review of land transfer documents, and the April 16, 1997, NRC staff

concurrence in the Final Completion Report for the site. This is the ninth of

18 Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project disposal sites to be placed

under NRC general license.

Meeting with Envirocare of Utah

On July 2, 1997, NRC staff met with Envirocare of Utah, Inc. (Envirocare) to

discuss possession of special nuclear material (SNM) and related issues at the

Envirocare site in Clive, Utah. NRC Region IV staff and the State of Utah

participated by telephone. Several members of the public, including companies

who send radioactive waste to Envirocare for disposal, attended the meeting as

observers. This meeting was part of Envirocare's response to a June 25, 1997,

Confirmatory Order issued by NRC directing the company to stop receiving shipments of waste material containing SNM, because the facility had exceeded

its possession limit (350 grams) and was out of compliance. The licensee presented plans to treat and dispose of waste in the next few weeks, so that

by about July 18, 1997, the total amount of SNM will be approximately 100 grams, and the licensee will be in compliance.

On July 7, 1997, Envirocare formally submitted to NRC a draft compliance plan.

The plan includes proposed approaches such as having SNM in waste, which

is received and disposed of in the same day, not count against the possession limit, and receiving waste with multiple manifests per single conveyance. NRC staff will review the Envirocare information with the State of Utah before taking followup action with respect to the Confirmatory Order.

Envirocare currently has a petition for rulemaking before NRC requesting a rule that would allow Envirocare to possess larger quantities of SNM. The petition is under NRC staff review. Envirocare also informed the NRC that it plans to submit a 10 CFR Part 70 license application for processing SNM in mixed waste, a Part 61 license application for disposing of SNM waste, a petition for a direct final rulemaking, and several exemption requests. Envirocare emphasized that compliance with its current possession limits impacts customers who are remediating sites and sending waste to Envirocare for disposal.

Savannah River Site Tank Closure

On July 9, 1997, the NRC and the Department of Energy (DOE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and an Interagency Agreement (IA). DOE plans to remove and process defense high-level wastes stored in 51 tanks at the Savannah River site, and to close the tanks once they are emptied of their contents. The MOU and IA establish the framework for the NRC to provide technical assistance to DOE with regard to reviewing its tank closure methodology and classifying residual tank waste. Residual waste classified as "incidental" is not subject to NRC licensing authority under the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974. The July 9, 1997, MOU was entered into under the broader January 15, 1997, MOU between NRC and DOE on Cooperation in Support of Significant Projects and Activities.

Office of Administration
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

U.S. Enrichment Corporation (USEC)

NRC's final security inspection report, dated June 24, 1997, regarding the protection of classified matter was completed and forwarded to USEC. An NRC

enforcement conference with USEC is scheduled for July 16, 1997. The Division of Facilities and Security (DFS) is coordinating NRC and DOE comments on USEC's preliminary information package that informs prospective bidders of the restrictions on foreign ownership, control or influence. Final comments should be returned to USEC by July 11, 1997. NRC's security inspection team composed of representatives from DFS and IRM is scheduled to conduct an inspection of the Portsmouth gaseous diffusion plant (GDP) during the week of July 28, 1997. The plant will be inspected against the security requirements of 10 CFR Part 95 and the approved Portsmouth GDP security plan for the protection of classified matter.

Suspicious Package/Explosives Detection/X-Ray Training

Representatives of the U.S. Capitol Police will lead a three day training program (July 21-23, 1997) in the identification of suspicious packages, explosives detection and use of the x-ray screening equipment owned and used by NRC. Participants include NRC staff from Headquarters, the Technical Training Center, Region III, and the Walnut Creek Field Office; NRC contractors from the Headquarters mail room; and special agents in training from the FBI. The schedule includes training by NRC's Radiation Safety Officer and a trip to Quantico, VA for an explosives demonstration.

Chief Information Office Items of Interest Week Ending July 11, 1997

Significant FOIA/PA Requests Received during the 5-Day Period of July 04, 1997

- July 10, 1997:

SECY-97-035, 4/6/97 memorandum to Regional Administrators providing implementation guidance. (FOIA/PA-97-245)

General Electric's uranium fuel fabrication facility in Wilmington, NC, regarding the dry uranium oxide conversion process and the FMOX Warehouse expansion. (FOIA/PA-97-246)

OIG investigation regarding named individual during 1996 and 1997. (FOIA/PA-97-247)

Materials Licensee Tracking System database on diskette for week ending 6/6/97. (FOIA/PA-97-248)

Enforcement Actions under 10 CFR 50.7 (employee protection), specific happenings covering 1991 through 1996, and a copy of FOIA/PA-97-223. (FOIA/PA-97-249)

Listing, in electronic format, of enforcements and investigations brought by NRC during the last 12 months. (FOIA/PA-97-250)

Meetings between Senior Managers and licensee's boards of directors for the period 1990 through present. (FOIA/PA-97-251)

Plant outages utilizing "Staff Guidelines for Restart Approval," Manual Chapter 0350, and any other guidance for such outages. (FOIA/PA-97-252)

Advanced Medical Systems, Inc., Cleveland, OH, regarding radiation exposure for 1995 through 1996, superfund programs, and emergency response plans. (FOIA/PA-97-253)

Region IV Policy Guide 1039, Handling of Allegations of Improper Actions by Staff at Plant Sites, related to named individual. (FOIA/PA-97-254)

Envirocare of Utah, Inc., and Waste Control Specialists of Pasadena, TX, all correspondence regarding licensees since February 24, 1997. (FOIA/PA-97-255)

Office of Human Resource
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Arrivals

LANGE, David	TECHNICAL PROGRAM MGR (PFT)	OEDO
MCKENNA, Thomas	SR EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORD (PFT)	AEOD

Departures

YPPARILA, Daisy	SECRETARY (OA) (OPFT)	RIV
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Office of Public Affair
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Media Interest

Bill Beach, Regional Administrator, Region III, held a news conference at the Cinton plant following a public meeting to review the facility's SALP report. Several reporters from news, radio and television media attended.

Press Releases

Headquarters:

97-103 NRC Renews License for GE's Fuel Fabrication Facility
97-104 Inspection Responsibility for Region IV Non-Power
Reactors
Shifted to NRC Headquarters

Regions:

II-97-53 NRC to Discuss Inspection Team Findings With Duke Power
at
Oconee Nuclear Plant at 1:00 p.m. on July 10
IV-97-39 NRC, OPPD to Meet for Discussion of Apparent Violations
at
Ft. Calhoun Nuclear Power Plant
I-97-78 NRC, PSE&G to Discuss Apparent Violations at Salem Plant
8 During Two Predecisional Enforcement Conferences on July
I-97-79 NRC Staff to Meet with North Jersey Hospital Officials
to
Discuss Apparent Violations

Office of the Secretar
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Decision Documents Released to the Public

Document	Date	Subject
1. SRM on 97-044 Issues Westinghouse	June 30, 1997	Policy and Key Technical Pertaining to the AP600 Standardized Passive Reactor Design
-- Commission Voting Record on 97-044	June 30, 1997	(same)
2. SECY-97-054 Policy of the	March 3, 1997	Final Recommendations on Statements and Implementing Procedures For: pStatement Principles and Policy for

Commission Correspondence Released to the Public

1. Letter to Representative George Miller dtd 7/2/97 concerns the Atlas Corporation's proposal to reclaim uranium mill tailings at their location in Moab, UT
2. Letter to Terry Concannon, State of Connecticut Nuclear Energy Advisory Council, dtd 7/2/97 concerns Millstone Unit 3 ICAVP process
3. Letter to Franklin Raines, OMB, dtd 7/1/97 provides NRC's Strategic Plan
4. Letter to Congress dtd 7/1/97 provides NRC's Strategic Plan

Federal Register Notices Issued to the Public

1. Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards; Subcommittee Meeting on Thermal Hydraulic Phenomena; Notice of Meeting on July 29-30, 1997

Region
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Annual Health Physics Society Meeting

Region I DRSS staff members made presentations on the reconcentration of radioactive material and measurement of radiation levels at a very small sewerage plant, and on NRC/licensee communication, at the annual meeting of the Health Physics Society in San Antonio, Texas during the week of June 30, 1997.

Region I
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Carolina Power and Light Company

Harris

On July 8, representatives from Carolina Power and Light Company were in the regional office to attend a Harris predecisional enforcement conference. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the apparent violation regarding the removal of containment missile shield blocks while in Mode 3 that was

identified in NRC Inspection Report 50-400/97-04. The licensee discussed the safety significance of the apparent violation and the actions to prevent recurrence.

Brunswick

On July 11, the Regional Administrator and other NRC staff were at the Brunswick facility to present the results of the latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP). Following the presentation, the NRC staff held a public meeting with local officials. The SALP assessment found the facility to have remained in the superior category in two areas, operations and maintenance, but performance in engineering and plant support declined to the good level.

Duke Power Company

Oconee

On July 10, 1997, the NRC Augmented Inspection Team conducted a public exit meeting at the Oconee facility. The team had been inspecting and assessing licensee actions in response to equipment failures encountered during 100 KV power supply testing activities in June 1997. The team concluded that the licensee's actions to review and determine the functionality of the Keowee Hydro Unit were adequate. The team concluded that the licensee's root cause investigation of the failures was thorough. The team also concluded that adequate compensatory actions were being taken for the identified areas to preclude similar events and support continued operability of the Oconee emergency power supplies. There were concerns with the testing and operation of the Keowee Unit that will be followed up by Region II.

Florida Power Corporation

Crystal River 3

The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and Region II held an exit for a team inspection at Crystal River on July 11, 1997. The purpose of the inspection was to review the licensee's implementation of 10 CFR 50.59 requirements related to modifications. The NRC found no significant problems with the licensee's program; there were some implementation concerns.

Region II
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Zion Performance Improvement Program Status

On July 10, 1997, Region III staff members and representatives of Commonwealth Edison Co. met at the Zion Nuclear Power Station Training Center to review the status and effectiveness of the restart plan and plant performance improvement program activities at the Zion Plant.

Region I
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Non-Power Reactor Program

Effective July 3, 1997, the Region IV non-power reactor program was transferred from Region IV to the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. This transfer included inspection, licensing and emergency preparedness activities. The involved licensees and states were notified telephonically and in writing prior to the transfer.

Axial Offset Anomaly at Callaway Plant

On July 10, 1997, Callaway Plant began a gradual power reduction as a result of concerns associated with an increasingly negative core neutron flux axial offset condition. The reduced power will provide additional margin to the axial offset and core operating limits. The licensee planned to reduce power to about 95 percent in a manner similar to an end-of-cycle coastdown.

The axial offset condition is caused by a combination of nucleate boiling, corrosion, and boron concentration resulting in the deposition of boron on the fuel in the upper core region. This concentrated poison in the upper core suppresses the neutron flux in the upper core area, causing the core flux peak to shift downward, resulting in a more negative axial offset. For this operating cycle, the measured axial offset has been considerably more negative than predicted.

The potential consequences of this condition include a reduced shutdown margin due to the release of the concentrated boron (negative reactivity) from the top of the core during a reactor trip or other crud burst causing event, increased radiation doses during outages due to the increased crud generation on the upper fuel and subsequent crud release, and a further reduction in power to maintain core power peaking factors within range of analyzed accident conditions.

The licensee has imposed a -15.5 administrative limit on axial offset, while the Technical Specification limit is -17.0. As of July 10, 1997, at the initiation of the power reduction, the limiting channel of axial offset was indicating -14.6. As of the morning of July 14, with reactor power at 95 percent, the axial offset was indicating -12.6.

Regional Administrator's Visit to STP

On July 8, 1997, the Regional Administrator visited the South Texas Project site. The visit included a site tour by the Senior Resident Inspector and Branch Chief, and concluded with discussions with Houston Lighting and Power management staff on the site's history and current performance.

Visit to Region IV from Mid-America Power representatives

Representatives from Mid-America Power, minority owners of the Cooper Nuclear Power Station, met with the Regional Administrator and staff in Arlington, Texas on July 11, 1997.

Office of the Executive Director for Operation
Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

Proposed Rule Signed by the EDO

On July 10, 1997, the Executive Director for Operations approved a proposed rule, "License Term for Medical Use Licenses," that would amend 10 CFR 35.18 to remove the reference to a five year license term for medical use licenses.

This constitutes notice to the Commission that, in accordance with the rulemaking authority delegated to the EDO, the EDO has signed this proposed rule for publication in the Federal Register.

Affairs

Office of Congressional

Items of Interest
Week Ending July 11, 1997

CONGRESSIONAL HEARING SCHEDULE, No. 26 OCA

CONTACT

DATE

&

PLACE

TIME

WITNESS

SUBJECT

COMMITTEE Madden 07/17

2360 RHOB TBA Markup FY98 Energy & Water

Appropriations Reps. Livingston/Obey

Appropriations Combs 07/22

366 DSOB 9:00 TBA S. 964, Ward Valley Land

Transfer Act Senators Murkowski/Bumpers

Energy & Natural Resources