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February 19, 2001

Docket Nos.: 50-348
50-364

NEL-01-0041

U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
ATTN: Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant
Report Of Unsatisfactory Testing

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with 10 CFR 26, Appendix A, paragraph 2.8, Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC) submits this letter to notify the NRC of a laboratory error. On January 08, 2001, an individual tested positive for alcohol and the second analysis on a separate breath measurement instrument confirmed the positive result. At the request of the tested individual, a blood specimen was submitted to PharmChem Laboratories, Inc., in Menlo Park, California for blood alcohol confirmation by Gas Chromatography, Mass Spectrometry (GCMS).

PharmChem received the specimen in question on January 10, 2001. On January 11, 2001 PharmChem reported to SNC that the specimen was screened as negative for alcohol. Because the blood alcohol submission is only done subsequent to a confirmatory breath analysis, PharmChem Laboratories and the SNC Safety & Health Coordinator discussed the test result and factors that may have affected the specimen (i.e., blood collection procedure, shipping delay by the carrier, and possible lab error). After reviewing the testing process and results, Dr. James Meeker, PharmChem Technical Director, indicated that a laboratory error was possible and subsequently ordered a re-test of the specimen on January 11, 2001. The specimen was re-tested twice, and both tests confirmed positive for alcohol by means of GCMS. A final report was provided to the SNC Medical Review Officer (MRO) who, on January 23, 2001, confirmed that the blood alcohol test in question was positive. The individual was denied access to the Farley Nuclear Plant site.

Following this occurrence, SNC and the MRO requested an investigation of the laboratory error. PharmChem Laboratory provided a detailed investigation of the laboratory error to SNC which has been reviewed by SNC's consulting toxicologist, Dr. Christopher Frings. Dr. Frings has determined that the investigation and conclusions were satisfactory.

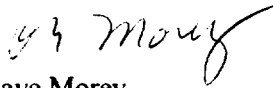
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The investigation showed no evidence of any systematic failure or fault that might be considered likely to produce the sort of error observed in the testing of this specimen. The results of the investigation indicate a random technician error, which has been addressed by PharmChem. To prevent further testing errors, PharmChem has revised the testing procedures for blood alcohol analyses to include analyses on two independent aliquots by different technicians.

SNC has utilized PharmChem Laboratories since January 1, 1994 and this is the first false negative blood alcohol experienced with this laboratory. The laboratory reports high proficiency performance scores on Health and Human Services (HHS) proficiency testing and nothing in the report indicates additional corrective action is required. SNC therefore has accepted the laboratory investigation.

Should you have any further questions, please advise.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dave Morey".

Dave Morey

JMG/maf: farleybacerror.doc

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U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

cc: Southern Nuclear Operating Company
Mr. L. M. Stinson, General Manager

U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D. C.
Mr. F. Rinaldi, Licensing Project Manager – Farley

U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Region II
Mr. L. A. Reyes, Regional Administrator
Mr. T. P. Johnson, Senior Resident Inspector – Farley