

TS
From: Tracy Walker
To: Eugene Cobey
Date: Fri, Jan 14, 2005 5:04 PM
Subject: Lochbaum Letter - Rev. 4

Here's the Lochbaum response for your review and concurrence. The response takes a different direction than what we talked about on the steam pipe failure issues. I looked at our September 1 response to Lochbaum on the work environment issues and tried not to be too repetitive.

I extended the due date to 1/20. Let me know if you have any comments and when you're happy with it, I'll give it to Ernie Wilson for review.

Tracy

CC: Theodore Wingfield

C-12

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

Mr. Lochbaum:

This letter is in response to your letter dated November 29, 2004 in which you expressed concern about the timeliness of NRC investigations of issues at the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants. You also raised questions regarding the work environment at the plants, specifically with respect to Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG) actions in response to the October 10, 2004 steam pipe failure at Hope Creek.

The NRC has taken issues raised by Dr. Harvin and others at the Hope Creek and Salem plants seriously. As you are aware, this information along with information from NRC inspections led us to undertake a special review of the work environment at the site. The NRC Office of Investigations (OI) has also been performing a detailed investigation into the issues raised by Dr. Harvin. The NRC's timeliness goals for completion of investigations of wrongdoing or harassment and intimidation consider that more complicated cases may take longer to complete. Discrimination cases have traditionally been very complex. We understand that the outcome of these cases is extremely important to all the parties involved. Neither the investigators nor NRC management will sacrifice thoroughness in order only to meet a timeliness goal.

As we discussed at the public meeting on January 12, a special inspection team thoroughly reviewed the circumstances surrounding the October 10th event. The inspection team concluded that PSEG's review of the event was comprehensive and appropriately considered potential causes and extent of condition for the identified problems. The team also determined that PSEG's proposed corrective actions were appropriate to address the identified problems and specifically confirmed that corrective actions necessary for restart were implemented. The performance issue that led to the event, failure to properly evaluate and take action for the failed moisture separator drain tank level control valve, is still under review by the staff. If we confirm the preliminary determination that the issue is of low to moderate safety significance, we will conduct additional focused inspection of the licensee's actions to address the issue. This inspection would be in addition to the already heightened oversight that we established in response to the work environment issues.

Thank you for your interest in these matters. Should you have any further questions or concerns related to these issues, please contact Eugene Cobey of my staff at 610-337-5171.

Sincerely,

David A. Lochbaum

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A. Randolph Blough
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USNRC Region I
475 Allendale Road
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David A. Lochbaum

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cc:

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