



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION IV

611 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-8064

October 8, 1996

IA 96-063

Mr. Larry Helmick
[HOME ADDRESS DELETED
UNDER 10 CFR 2.790]

SUBJECT: NRC INVESTIGATION REPORT NO. 4-96-005

Dear Mr. Helmick:

This refers to an investigation conducted by the NRC's Office of Investigations (OI) at Nebraska Public Power District's (NPPD) Cooper Nuclear Station (CNS). The investigation was completed in July 1996. The investigation was conducted to review an apparent failure on the part of CNS employees to report the full extent of a December 1995 incident in which maintenance work was performed on the wrong plant component. The incident involved performing maintenance on a valve in the core spray system instead of the correct valve in the residual heat removal system.

In February 1996, NPPD provided the NRC the results of its investigation into this matter. NPPD found that information regarding the electricians' involvement in this incident, including the fact that the core spray valve motor had been electrically disconnected and reconnected, had not been documented when the error involving working on the wrong valve was discovered. NPPD's investigation also found, based in part on your admission, that you and another electrician attempted to convince other workers not to volunteer information about your involvement in this incident, apparently out of fear that you would be fired for violating electrical safety requirements. You and another electrician were terminated from your jobs at CNS as a result of this incident.

The NRC contacted you during its investigation of this matter, but you declined to provide specific information. Based on a review of information provided by NPPD and OI's interviews of others, the NRC concludes that you and another electrician did attempt to cover up your involvement in this incident. This attempt to conceal information, which may have been important in assuring that the core spray valve had not been disabled by this unauthorized maintenance activity, is unacceptable behavior in the nuclear industry. The NRC and its licensees must be able to rely on employees to provide complete and accurate information in matters that involve the safety of the facility.

Based on the disciplinary action taken by your former employer, the NRC does not plan to pursue formal enforcement action against you. Nonetheless, in consideration of your involvement in this matter, the NRC requests that you respond to this letter to inform us as to why the NRC should have confidence that you will adhere to NRC requirements and provide complete and accurate information should you in the future be employed in the nuclear industry.

Mr. Larry Helmick

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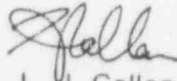
While formal enforcement action is not being taken against you, you should be aware that the NRC's regulations allow the issuance of civil sanctions to be taken directly against unlicensed persons who, through their deliberate misconduct, cause a licensee to be in violation of NRC requirements. Deliberate misconduct includes an intentional act or omission that the person knows constitutes a violation of a requirement, procedure or training instruction. An order may also be issued to an individual to prevent his or her engaging in licensed activities at all NRC licensed facilities. A violation of this regulation as set forth in 10 CFR 50.5, "Deliberate Misconduct," (Enclosed), may also lead to criminal prosecution. Similar failures in the future could lead to formal NRC enforcement action against you.

Please provide your response to this letter to me within 30 days at 611 Ryan Plaza Drive, Suite 400, Arlington, Texas 76011.

In accordance with Section 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," Part 2, Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, records or documents compiled for enforcement purposes are placed in the NRC Public Document Room (PDR). A copy of this letter with your address removed, and your response, will be placed in the PDR after 45 days unless you provide sufficient basis to withdraw this letter. A copy also will be forwarded to NPPD at that time.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Gary Sanborn, regional Enforcement Officer, at 817-860-8222 or 800-952-9677.

Sincerely,



L. J. Callan

Regional Administrator

Enclosure: 10 CFR 50.5