

From: PAUL M. BLANCH <PMBLANCH@ix.netcom.com>
To: JZ <JAZWOL@aol.com>
Date: 8/15/96 6:24am
Subject: WHAT A DIFFERENCE A WEEK MAKES

I couldn't have said it better myself.

This editorial was published on the editorial page Aug. 15 by the New London Day<

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What a difference week makes< by Maura Casey<

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“In-de-pend-ent, adj. Free from the influence, guidance, or control of others.”<

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When comparing the words of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission last week and its actions this week, it is hard not to feel confused.<

Last week, NRC Chairwoman Shirley Ann Jackson said that the NRC would appoint an independent review team to judge whether Northeast Utilities' Millstone Station is safe enough to restart.<

Those were encouraging words, especially as Dr. Jackson implied what many here believe: that the relationship was too cozy between NU and the NRC.<

“The NRC and NU did not always function as they should have,” she said.

She was right. Since the NRC's lax regulation has eroded people's belief in the agency's watchdog role, and citizens' trust of NU has been shredded, people welcomed an independent team to keep both parties honest.<

So it was startling that the NRC Monday summoned NU's top management hundreds of miles to Rockville, MD., seeking the company's agreement to the NRC's terms. The meeting, while not closed, certainly wasn't accessible to ordinary citizens as it was held too far away.<

It was even stranger to comprehend what constituted the NRC's idea of an “independent” review team. How did our public watchdog figure was the best way to pick an independent review team? Let Northeast Utilities select who will serve on it, of course.

That is the fractured logic that sent us running to the dictionary. Maybe, just maybe, the definition of the word “independent” had changed since last week. But, as you can see, “independent” still means “free of the influence of others.”<

So how can NU, the company that runs the plants which have failed in so many ways, be trusted to pick an “independent” review team to say when the plants would be ready to reopen?<

The NRC says that it will retain veto power over which consultants are chosen. But the agency is missing the point.

The idea of choosing an independent review team evolved from the fact that, by the NRC's own admission, the agency's past regulation had been poor and the company's safety standards had not been as high as they should have been.

So leaving the choice of consultants to the company, and veto power to the overseeing agency, does nothing to reassure the public that anything has or will change. Why not involve at least several experts who are not beholden either to the company or the NRC for their livelihoods?<

William Russell, the NRC director of nuclear reactor regulation, seemed to be in an inordinate hurry to speed this process along. The meeting was

held on Monday. He said by the next day, Tuesday, he wanted a letter from NU agreeing to the terms and the OK concerning the details to go out by yesterday.

What is the rush? NRC spokesman Victor Dricks said Mr. Russell just wanted to get the ball rolling.<

Yet Mr. Russell's unseemly haste and the agency's decision to hold the meeting so far away from Connecticut makes it appear that the agency is more anxious about getting the job over with than doing the job right.<

The agency can't afford to give that impression. The appearance of being too cozy with the utilities it regulates has been a disaster for both the NRC, NU and public trust.<

People in this area are just beginning to believe in the NRC again, based upon the honesty and plain talk Dr. Jackson exhibited last week in her meeting with the public.<

Mr. Russell, of all people, should not be giving the public the impression that he will allow NU to control this supposedly "independent" process.

Mr. Russell was the former administrator of NRC Region 1 and for years has been the NRC director of nuclear reactor regulation. That means he was one of the people responsible for overlooking problems at Millstone Station.

The NRC blew its responsibilities with Millstone Station. While bad habits are hard to break, the agency should not appear so eager to make the same sorry mistakes all over again.

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From: PAUL M. BLANCH <PMBLANCH@ix.netcom.com>
To: PMBLANCH <PMBLANCH@ix.netcom.com>
Date: 8/14/96 2:21pm
Subject: [Fwd: PR-113 Millstone Order Issued Requiring Indepen. Assessment]

This is a multi-part message in MIME format.

-----6EFF2931E80
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

We may want to consider a hearing on this WRT the Independence of the selection process and the very limited scope of the assessment. This is a hardware audit only and the other "soft"(ethics, intentional wrongdoing, employee concerns, management compedence, procedure compliance, QA, Regulatory compliance, 10 CFR Part 100, etc.) issues will be addressed by the NRC.

I don't think this is what the Chairman had in mind when she discussed the independent assessment team.

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Return-Path: <pr-opa@nrc.gov>
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Received: from irm12 (irm12.nrc.gov [148.184.200.31]) by igate.nrc.gov (8.7.5/8.7.5) with SMTP id RAA21285; Wed, 14 Aug 1996 17:45:24 -0400 (EDT)
Received: from (localhost.nrc.gov) by irm12 (5.x/TMD1.7) id AA00933; Wed, 14 Aug 1996 17:45:17 -0400
Date: Wed, 14 Aug 1996 17:45:17 -0400
Message-Id: <s2121061.050@nrc.gov>
Errors-To: opa@nrc.gov
Reply-To: pr-opa@nrc.gov
Originator: pr-opa@nrc.gov
Sender: pr-opa@nrc.gov
Precedence: bulk
From: PUBLIC AFFAIRS <OPA@nrc.gov>
To: Multiple recipients of list <pr-opa@nrc.gov>
Subject: PR-113 Millstone Order Issued Requiring Indepen. Assessment
X-Listprocessor-Version: 6.0c -- ListProcessor by Anastasios Kotsikonas
X-Comment: NRC Press Releases and Speeches
X-Mozilla-Status: 0001

----- 96-113.TXT follows -----
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234

No. 96-113

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Wednesday, August 14, 1996)

NRC ISSUES ORDER REQUIRING INDEPENDENT
ASSESSMENT OF MILLSTONE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued an immediately effective confirmatory order that requires Northeast Nuclear Energy Company to contract for an independent assessment of the results of programs aimed at resolving existing design and management deficiencies at the three Millstone nuclear power plants in Connecticut.

The licensee has agreed to obtain the services of highly qualified and independent engineers who will independently verify the results of the corrective action programs at the plants, currently shut down. NRC must approve the team's qualifications and independence of the licensee. The team's findings will be provided concurrently to the NRC and the licensee.

The order further requires that the independent assessment plan must include:

- An in-depth review of selected plant systems since initial licensing.
- Risk and safety based criteria for selecting the systems.
- An audit plan to ensure that the quality of results of problem identification and corrective action programs of selected systems is representative of plant systems overall.
- Procedures for reporting findings concurrently to the licensee and the NRC and for commenting on the licensee's resolution of team recommendations.

An NRC headquarters team lead by a senior executive will oversee the independent verification team's work and will conduct its own inspection and review of the licensee's corrective actions and their implementation.

The licensee is required to provide progress reports on its implementation of the independent verification team's recommendations to the NRC's Regional Administrator in Region I, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and the Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, at NRC headquarters in Rockville, Maryland.

Millstone Unit 1 was shut down last November for refueling. Unit 2 was taken out of service in February due to a safety injection system being declared inoperable. Unit 3 was shut down in March after the licensee determined that containment isolation valves for a feedwater pump were also declared inoperable.

NRC inspections have identified significant failures to comply with the conditions of licenses, NRC regulations and the plants' updated Final Safety Analysis Reports. The NRC issued letters requiring the licensee to provide, before restart, information to assure the plants will be operated safely and in accordance with all regulatory and license conditions. In addition, the Commissioners will have to approve restart before the plants can resume operation.

Any person adversely affected by the confirmatory order, other than the licensee, may request a hearing within 20 days of its issuance. The request should be submitted to the Secretary,
Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Attention: Chief, Docketing and
Service Section, Washington, D.C. 20555.

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Editors: The text of the confirmatory order has been posted on the Internet at this address: <http://www.gov/OPA/reports>.

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From: PAUL M. BLANCH <PMBLANCH@ix.netcom.com>
To: JZ <JAZWOL@aol.com>
Date: 8/13/96 10:44am
Subject: Fwd: Re: DeNile

Subject: Re: DeNile
Sent: 8/13/96 3:51 PM
Received: 8/13/96 2:02 PM
From: Donald Carr, DCarr@gw.ctg.com
To: PAUL M. BLANCH, PMBLANCH@ix.netcom.com

Paul:

Excellant article. When are the people who have the real power.. the shareholders going to wake up and find that the NRC fines are cutting into their ROI and bring in some enlightened management? The fines are trivial.. what will really cost is the reengineering costs required to build a minimal level of safety.

Have a nice day.

Don

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From: PAUL M. BLANCH <PMBLANCH@ix.netcom.com>
To: JZ <JAZWOL@aol.com>
Date: 8/13/96 4:34pm
Subject: Independent ????

8/13/96

John A. Zwolinski, Deputy Director Division of Reactor Projects -I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear John:

The enclosed story is from today's Hartford Courant.

I find it incredible that after Dr. Jackson informed the public there will be an independent assessment before Millstone restart, NU gets to pick the team (with the NRC's approval) of course. My understanding is that NU asked Russell yesterday if it would be OK if the team was comprised of Millstone 2 employees providing the independent assessment of Millstone 3. I understand Russell said this looked OK to him. Maybe Yankee Atomic after their work on Maine Yankee LOCA analysis would be even better.

What is the logic behind the NRC and NU conspiring to exclude every knowledgeable ex-employee from participating in this assessment? Is it because we know where the bodies are buried or is this the NRC's means of suppressing information or possibly both? This is very clear by the NRC's own criteria of eliminating ex-NU employees. You might as well just state that "no persons who have ever questioned either NU's or the NRC's safety ethic will be considered for this team" or maybe "No Whistleblowers Allowed." Contractors will not be willing to challenge either the NRC or NU for fear of never getting hired again in the industry. Even persons from the national labs have a bias in favor of the industry.

The mission of the NRC is to protect and serve the public. If this is the case, than the public should be appointing the assessment team.

Assuming an acceptable team is established how will the issues such as the culture, management competence and regulatory compliance at NU be addressed?

As I stated to Dr. Jackson last week, every person in the nuclear industry has some bias whether they are a utility, contractor, NRC employee and even myself (at least I am willing to admit to it). If this team fails to include some industry critics, it will be a further waste of our tax and ratepayer dollars.

I am very confident Dr. Jackson will not let Russell get away with these tactics. Russell must really think the public is a bunch of idiots. Please inform Bill Russell we are not about to let him get away with these fraudulent and deceptive tactics.

~~9609100185~~ 47

If the NRC wants to regain any public confidence, please put some nuclear balance on this team and address all issues not just a sampling of some hardware!

By copies of this letter I am requesting members of the public call Dr. Jackson's office at 800-426-8096 and let her know exactly what Russell is up to today.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Blanch
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Regulators call NU back to provide more information

By SUSAN E. KINSMAN
This story ran in the Courant August 13, 1996

Northeast Utilities, the star witness in its own defense as a nuclear plant operator, is being called back a third time by federal regulators to show why it should continue to run the Connecticut Yankee nuclear plant.

The federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission asked the utility Friday for more information to determine whether or not Connecticut Yankee's operating license should be suspended, modified or revoked.

The letter made public Monday was described by NRC spokeswoman Diane Screnci as an "extension rather than escalation" of the NRC's review of Connecticut Yankee, focusing primarily on safety-related issues discovered since the plant's July 22 shutdown.

The regulators also advised the utility that it could face penalties for possible violations of NRC regulations or of the plant's operating license that were identified during a special NRC inspection at the plant in March and April.

NU operates the 582-megawatt reactor for a consortium of utility owners, including NU subsidiaries, which own a 49 percent share.

The NRC asked NU for similar information March 8 and May 17, after widespread safety-related problems were uncovered at the three Millstone nuclear power plants - named in February to the NRC's watch list of its most troubled reactors.

And twice before, NU swore under oath that it was safe to keep Connecticut Yankee running.

NU said that although it had found problems in updating the plant's final safety analysis report and licensing documents, they were not as extensive as those discovered at Millstone, and did not justify shutting down the plant.

Anthony Nericcio, a Connecticut Yankee spokesman, said those previous reports were "based on the best information we had at the time. As our analysis and work continued, we have identified other issues."

But the latest NRC letter noted "additional design deficiencies that have been identified or further evaluated and determined to affect operability of systems or components."

Among the systems where NU and the NRC found problems were critical, safety-related cooling water and emergency core cooling systems.

Screnci, the NRC's regional spokeswoman, said the NRC does not believe that NU deliberately concealed any problems in its previous filings.

If so, the NRC would have turned the matter over to federal investigators, she said.

NU has 30 days to respond to the NRC's latest request.

It is uncertain whether it will extend the shutdown of the plant because NU has not determined how long it will take to correct the problems uncovered to date and to refuel the plant.

Nor did Nericcio rule out finding more problems at Connecticut Yankee.

He said 70 independent contractors have been hired to review the plant's final safety analysis report and licensing documents to make sure there are no other discrepancies involving major safety systems.

"They are going from A to Z," Nericcio said.

Meanwhile, NU and NRC officials agreed Monday on the ground rules for an independent review team to confirm that the fixes that NU has developed are correcting long-standing problems at the Millstone nuclear power plants.

The team must verify that the corrections are working before the NRC will authorize NU to restart any of the plants, now closed indefinitely by NRC safety concerns.

The review panel, announced by Shirley Ann Jackson, the NRC chairman, in her visit to Millstone last week, will consist of an independent architectural engineering or consulting firm selected and approved by the NRC and paid for by NU.

The NRC excluded from participation any previous employee or consultant at Millstone 3 and anyone with a financial interest in the plant.

The terms of the agreement will be issued by the NRC in a confirmatory order Wednesday, said regional spokesman Victor Dricks.

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