

From: <VMBLANCH@aol.com>  
To: WND2.WNP3(jaz),udl.internet3("JAZWOL@aol.com")  
Date: 8/4/96 11:54pm  
Subject: Fwd: What about NU!!!!!!!!!!!!

By Scott Harper, The Virginian-Pilot, Norfolk, Va.

Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business News

Aug. 3--The Nuclear Regulatory Commission wants Virginia Power to explain why two switches controlling safety monitors at the Surry Nuclear Power Station were set in the wrong position for as long as 10 years.

Virginia Power officials must travel to Atlanta next week for an enforcement hearing before the NRC, according to a notice issued to the utility July 11 and made public Thursday.

The federal commission will decide whether the problem at the plant, about 40 miles west of Norfolk on the James River, was serious enough to warrant a fine or another penalty, said NRC spokesman Roger Hannah.

The glitch is being described as technical in nature and not a threat to the safety around the Surry facility, according to Virginia Power and the NRC.

The switches are important because they command equipment that measures hydrogen gas in the containment building during a major nuclear accident, explained James Norvelle, a Virginia Power spokesman. The containment building houses the reactor and the primary cooling system, and is designed to prevent leakage of any radioactivity.

In a disaster, the monitors would tell operators if hydrogen was collecting in concentrations within the containment area that could cause an explosion, Norvelle said.

"But it would take about four days for gas to reach that combustible level," he said, "and we surely would be taking plenty of actions before then."

An operator visiting Surry from Virginia Power's North Anna nuclear station noticed the switches in the wrong position during a routine walk-through on May 10, according to an NRC report of the incident.

Protocol was checked and the switches set correctly on May 22, the report said.

Virginia Power then notified the NRC, which began investigating why the switches had been positioned in a way that would make automatic hydrogen monitoring difficult.

The switches and their associated equipment were required at nuclear plants across the country in the wake of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in Pennsylvania. At Surry, they were installed in 1984.

Inspectors determined that the switches were in the incorrect position since

at least 1990. Technical staff at Surry speculated the switches could have been that way for as long as 10 years, the report said.

"The procedures were not clear" for correct positioning, Norvelle said.

"Once it became known we had a problem, we changed them and notified the NRC."

Virginia Power has not been hit with a major violation at Surry for four years, the NRC said. The last penalty came in 1992, when the NRC fined Virginia Power \$50,000 for improperly configured safety injection pumps at Surry.

The utility paid another \$50,000 fine for the same problem in the fall of 1991, records show.

"But it would take about four days for gas to reach that combustible level," he said, "and we surely would be taking plenty of actions before then."

How long did it take TMI to reach high H2 levels or was this event outside the "design Basis?" My recollection was that it was much less than four days.

More like 9 hrs and 50 minutes!

Is this an accurate statement by Hannah or just more false information for the stupid public?

Please send a copy of this to Hannah and tell him to check his facts.

Thanks

Paul

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Forwarded message:

Subj: What about NU!!!!!!!!!!  
Date: 96-08-04 19:01:31 EDT  
From: AJR2100  
To: VMBLANCH

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CC: WND2.WNP3(jnh),TWD1.TWP4(wjs),WND1.WNP2(dcd),WND2....