

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

August 20, 1997

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE 97-66: FAILURE TO PROVIDE SPECIAL LENSES FOR
OPERATORS USING RESPIRATOR OR SELF-CONTAINED
BREATHING APPARATUS DURING EMERGENCY
OPERATIONS

Addressees

All holders of operating licenses or construction permits for nuclear power and non-power reactors and all licensed reactor operators and senior operators.

Purpose

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing this information notice to alert addressees to a potential problem associated with procedures or instructions to ensure that licensed operators who require corrective lenses are equipped with the special lenses needed for respirator or self-contained breathing apparatus use. It is expected that recipients will review the information for applicability to their facilities and consider actions, as appropriate, to avoid similar problems. However, suggestions contained in this information notice are not NRC requirements; therefore, no specific action is required.

Background

For most licensees, the final or updated safety analysis report establishes that for some design-basis events, licensed operators must perform licensed duties while wearing a respirator or a self-contained breathing apparatus. Some licenses require operators to wear corrective lenses while performing licensed duties.

Description of Circumstances

In April 1997, the Quality Assurance Department of Waterford Generating Station, Unit 3, audited licensed operator medical conditions. The audit found that the facility had insufficient instructions or procedures in place to ensure that all licensed operators who were required to wear corrective lenses were equipped with the appropriate lenses for self-contained breathing apparatus. NRC inspectors subsequently confirmed that the licensee final safety analysis report required licensed operators to perform licensed duties while wearing self-contained breathing apparatus in some instances. The inspectors also confirmed that the licensee had established training and administrative procedures requiring all licensed operators to be qualified in the use of self-contained breathing apparatuses, and requiring that self-contained breathing apparatuses be staged, as required, in the control room. However, the inspectors found that the licensee did not have specific procedures or instructions in place to ensure

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that the special lenses were available for those licensed operators on shift who were required to wear corrective lenses with the self-contained breathing apparatus when performing licensed duties.

In April and May 1997, during inspections at Arkansas Nuclear One, Comanche Peak Steam Electric Station, Fort Calhoun Station, and Wolf Creek Generating Station, inspectors found that the licensees had not established administrative controls for special lens inserts and had not ensured that the requisite special lenses were available for licensed operators. During other inspections in the same timeframe, inspectors found that Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant and Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, had procedures pertaining to special lens inserts in place, but had failed to properly implement them. Finally, inspectors at River Bend Station found that the licensee had changed the type of self-contained breathing apparatus used at the facility, which required different type of corrective lens inserts, without ensuring the new inserts were also available. In all cases, inspectors confirmed that mitigation of certain design-basis events required operators to perform licensed duties while wearing a respirator or a self-contained breathing apparatus.

This information notice reminds licensees to ensure that licensed operators who need to wear corrective lenses while performing licensed duties should have proper corrective lenses available for conditions requiring a respirator or a self-contained breathing apparatus. This information notice requires no specific action or written response. If you have any questions about this notice, please call the technical contacts listed below or the appropriate Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) project manager.

/s/'d

Marylee M. Slosson, Acting Director
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