

Problem with bolts clear in 'hindsight'

By Jim Harper
Staff Writer

R. B. Richey, who directed the Brunswick nuclear plant shutdown so walls that were not earthquake-proof could be repaired, said last week that a five-year CP&L delay in tending to the matter "may have been our not realizing the extent of the problem."

"With hindsight," said Richey, "we know better."

The construction problems in walls of the emergency diesel generator building, first noted by a CP&L engineer in 1987, were the subject of a CP&L-Nuclear Regulatory Commission enforcement conference in Maryland last week.

(In 1987 the CP&L official in charge at the Brunswick plant was Pat Howe. He was replaced in November, 1988, by Russ Starkey. Richey replaced Starkey as vice-president in charge April 2.)

After the Maryland session an NRC investigation into the construction of the plant and generator building was begun. Brown & Root, the general contractor for the Brunswick construction project in the early 1970s, has joined in looking at the work by an unnamed subcontractor.

Concurrent with the April 21 shutdown to fix fastenings in the generator building walls, work planned

during downtime in the near future was commenced. A CP&L spokesman said Monday that repair work in the generator building had not yet been certified as ready for resumed operation.

If the generator building is ready, start-up of Brunswick unit one could come by the end of the month, and start-up of unit two by mid-June.

The emergency diesel generators are to provide power for an orderly shut-down of the nuclear units if electricity is not available through normal sources.

Richey explained last week that a key element of safe shut-down is core cooling, which would be provided by electric pumps.

A second issue raised by an NRC special inspection team, and discussed last week in Maryland, is the appropriate qualification of ten pumps which provide cooling water for various plant services.

"Since 1981 the nuclear water service pumps have not been long-term seismically qualified and have remained short-term qualified and seismically degraded," an NRC report said on April 29.

Richey said the pumps will be replaced with properly qualified equipment by 1994, in accordance with a plan submitted by CP&L last year.

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of the plant. Management not providing leadership and support needed for improvement.

Lack of critical self-assessment, resulting in failure to recognize problems and implement effective corrective action.

The assessment was quite similar to a "root cause" analysis April 29 in which the NRC cited "lack of management vision" and detailed how the power company had known about a structure problem in walls of the emergency diesel generator building five years before they got around to starting repairs (see related story).

Smith's Thursday statement was: "Our objective is to raise the Brunswick plant's overall performance to the level of excellence. The safe reliable and efficient operation of all our company's nuclear facilities is our number-one corporate priority. Our goal is to bring the performance of all our nuclear units to the same excellent level as our Harris plant. While many improvements have been made at the Brunswick plant, other needs for substantial improvement remain."

In a Friday statement after the exit meeting Smith said, "The NRC reports in the meeting today are part of the ongoing process that includes our company's own evaluation for improvement at the Brunswick plant. While improvements have been made, there remains the need for further work to be done, especially to reduce the large backlog of maintenance and modification work. The company is committed to

achieving the same high level of excellent performance at Brunswick as currently is the case at our Harris plant."

The NRC exit meeting came at the end of a special team inspection that began in February and was headed by Albert F. Gibson, director of the division of reactor safety in the NRC Atlanta regional office.

In the exit meeting Friday, Stewart Ebnetter, regional administrator for the NRC, said his agency could share some of the blame with CP&L for not requiring action on maintenance discrepancies sooner, but said that responsibility for correcting the problem belonged with the power company.

Ebnetter cited "far too much short-term orientation," as opposed to seeking long-term solutions, by CP&L.

"Many problem solutions (by CP&L) have involved moving people without changing the process," Ebnetter said.

He said CP&L needs a "new long-term baseline on what needs are at the Brunswick plant, because problems won't be solved in a week or two."

James Pretlow, from the NRC office of nuclear reactor regulation in Washington, told CP&L representatives at the meeting, "There is no reason to believe the staff is not as good as any in the country, but solutions for problems have to come from CP&L management and staff."

The findings discussed in the exit meeting are expected to be compiled and released by the NRC this week.

CP&L guards treated

Four Burns Security guards, sent to keep CP&L employees safe after a high level of fumes was noted at the Brunswick plant, were themselves taken to Doshier Memorial Hospital for observation and treatment last Thursday.

Three of the four were released Thursday, while a fourth was treated and observed over the weekend. She was released Monday.

A CP&L spokesman said the incident last Thursday morning arose when chlorine, treating river water used in plant cooling, emitted noxious fumes. Plant personnel were evacuated from the area and the guard posted.

Security guards treated and released Thursday included Delmar Holmes and Edward Meyers. Donna Brown was treated and released on Monday. The name of the fourth guard was not available from Burns or CP&L.

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Rating shows Harris superior

By Jim Harper
Staff Writer

Carolina Power and Light Co. president and chairman Sherwood H. Smith, Jr., last week called for the Brunswick nuclear plant to achieve the level of "excellence" occupied by the company's Harris plant near Raleigh.

Objective comparisons of Harris' performance, and the level to which Brunswick is to be guided, include the NRC Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) scores for nuclear plants in the Southeast. In the last two reporting periods Harris was tied for first place in the region with the St. Lucie plant in Florida and Grand Gulf plant in Mississippi.

In the August, 1991, SALP, Harris was given a score of one -- the highest mark -- in plant operation, radiological controls, emergency preparedness, security and safeguards, engineering and technical support, and safety assessment and quality verification. Harris also received a score of two for maintenance and surveillance (testing).

At the same time Brunswick was given twos for all categories except for a one in security and safeguards and a three -- the lowest

possible score -- in engineering and technical support.

In the March SALP, Harris received identical marks as in August, while Brunswick fell to threes in maintenance and surveillance and in safety assessment and quality verification, dropped to a two in security and safeguards and rose to a two in engineering and technical support.

Another comparison is in the number of civil penalties assessed by the NRC. Harris has received two in the five years of its operation. Brunswick has received ten in the last five years, and 17 since 1976.

Another criterion measuring performance is cost-effectiveness of operation. Last year Harris ranked fifth among 73 plants in the nation while Brunswick was ranked 27th.

Another comparison is "capacity factors", or percentage of time in operation. In 1989 Harris scored 74.8, compared with Brunswick unit I at 60.4 and Brunswick unit II at 60.5. In 1990 Harris scored 84.2 compared to Brunswick I at 62.4 and Brunswick II at 58.6. In 1991 Harris scored 78.7 compared with Brunswick I at 65.4 and Brunswick II at 55.1.

Curbside recycling Continued from page 1

maintenance fee charged by Waste Industries, plus a charge by the city to establish a reserve for the purchase of new 90-gallon trash containers which are provided to residents at no cost.

"We no longer charge citizens for carts. That service is provided in your rate," Honeycutt said, pointing out that the carts have a five-year life expectancy.

The loose trash pick-up charge takes into account the salaries of two city workers, as well as operation and maintenance costs of the equipment. That figure is divided by the number of citizens and then by 12 to come up with the monthly rate of \$4.50, Honeycutt said.

"They're paying for what we're doing," he said. Everyone is charged for the service, whether or not they use it.

"There's been a lot of negative reaction to loose trash pick-up," Honeycutt said. People like the service but they don't want to pay additional for it.

In developing the budget proposal, Honeycutt observed that loose trash pick-up costs have gone down, and suggested they be reduced. However, regular trash pick-up charges are expected to increase, thus offsetting any decrease in rates.

According to the director of public works, the city has no policy requiring residents to participate in the

city-sponsored garbage collection. As a result, some residents dropped their accounts with the city and are hauling their trash to the county transfer station outside Southport.

Waste Industries based its rate on a certain number of customers. Since the actual number of customers is lower than what the rate is figured on, the rate for 1992-93 will be recalculated, perhaps resulting in higher charges for residents, Honeycutt said.

The 1992-93 budget proposal recommends making garbage pick-up, loose trash pick-up and curbside recycling mandatory for all city residents, raising rates to \$11.15. However, Honeycutt said the board of aldermen could decide to provide residents with just weekly garbage collection, keeping bills as low as \$5.25 a month. Or they could implement a three-cent tax increase which would reduce solid waste fees by \$2 a month, a move considered "somewhat less regressive" in the proposed city budget.

Commercial customers can also expect to see some changes in their garbage rate, Honeycutt pointed out.

"No one is being charged correctly," he said. "Everyone is either going to go up or down." He estimated the range from \$10 less to \$20 more, and said customers would be notified of any rate change.

Pittman resigns Continued from page 1

Arthur Pittman and the people he has surrounded himself with," the board chairman said. "I personally hate to see him go."

Among Pittman's accomplishments since his arrival in 1985, according to the Johnson, include doubling the size of the medical staff and gross business at the hospital, spending millions on new and updated equipment, and starting an employee pension trust fund.

"We have operated in the black every year since he's been here," Johnson said. "He has proven himself a professional hospital administrator."

Pittman, who said he is leaving Doshier with "mixed emotions", said his job was made easier with the help of a supportive board.

"You certainly can't do it without them," he commented on Tuesday. Also important is "finding the right people ... being able to attract a

competent staff.

"The people working here are the best I've ever worked with," he said. "People make the organization run. Without competent, professional and caring people behind the technology, not much is accomplished," he said.

Shomaker, who will serve as acting administrator, said he was surprised when he learned of Pittman's resignation and his appointment to the top administrative position, and said that "it's terribly premature" to say whether or not he will ask to be considered permanently for the job.

"We have a very strong management team here and that will definitely make my job easier," Shomaker said.

Asked if he'd make any recommendations for his replacement, Pittman said, "Absolutely not. They (the trustees) have to live with that choice."

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