

Power company executives say nukes can be safe



Billy Clements

By MARCY BOYCE
Battalion Reporter

Improvements in both design and operating procedures at nuclear power plants make them "safe enough," two representatives of the Texas Utilities Generating Company at Comanche Peak, said at Texas A&M University Wednesday.

Billy Clements, vice president of the plant, and David Chapman, manager of quality control at the facility, spoke in a program entitled "Nuclear Energy: How Safe?" sponsored by the Great Issues committee.

Clements is not kin to Texas Governor Bill Clements. The plant he and Chapman work for is 12 miles outside of Glenrose.

The Three Mile Island accident could have been prevented had operators at the plant reacted correctly to signals, Clements said.

"A series of small incidents grew into a catastrophe" because they didn't, he said. "The smugness is gone," he said.

"Management is more aware. And even if they are not public-minded, they have financial investments to protect.

"Operator training is one area in which we have made great strides," he said.

Texas Utilities now concentrates more on basic procedures for small incidents, such as those which built up and led to the Three Mile Island accident. In the past, he said, training emphasized what to do under the worst possible circumstances.

Clements compared that to training people who work at the top of Rudder Tower what to do if the building crumbled rather than if it caught fire. One is much more probable than the other, he said.

Requiring operators to return annually for additional training instead of every two years is another step towards creating safer plants, Clements said.

Moreover, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is requiring shift supervisors at the plants to receive 60 college hours in

subjects such as reactor physics and chemistry.

Ideally, Clements said, plants would like to hire college graduates as technical advisers. This individual, with two to three years experience in the field, would be independent of operations.

Design, as well as procedures, have been reviewed. Components of the nuclear plants are conservatively designed, Chapman said.

"We are required to postulate conditions for which no one can explain mechanisms for their occurrence," he said, "and then provide back-up systems for alternative methods."

For example, Chapman said, coolant piping is designed much thicker than it actually needs to be. And back-up systems are provided assuming there is a double-ended break in the pipe with coolant flowing out of both ends.

But additional evidence of the safety of the nuclear plants, Chapman said, is the

multi-level independent system of checks and balances. These include inspections by quality control at the plant, as well as inspections, routine and by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, he said.

"There is some risk," Chapman said, regardless of these safety precautions. "But the risk involved with no energy developed at all is probably the worst risk of all."

Clements said a moratorium would delay construction of 30 nuclear plants which could save a billion barrels of oil a day in imports.

But even if all energy in the United States was generated by nuclear energy, the Union of Concerned Scientists have estimated that the total reduction from life expectancy for the average adult would be only two days, Chapman said.

"A resident of Harrisburg, Pa., receives less radioactivity within one year than someone who lives in the Rocky Mountains," he said.



David Chapman

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Silver Taps tonight

Silver Taps will be held in front of the Academic Building today at 10:30 p.m.

The ceremony will honor Texas A&M University students Stuart W. Black, who died Oct. 21, and Kathleen Fox, who died Saturday.

Lights should be turned off from 10:20-10:50 p.m.



Halloween pachyderms

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

This herd of "elephants," with costumes fashioned from old sweatshirts, joined a great mob of ghouls, weirdies and various and sundry odd creatures that

swarmed over the Texas A&M University campus and the local community Wednesday night celebrating Halloween. For more pictures, see page 8.

Collective tension' prevails

Murder threats real to some

By RICHARD OLIVER
Battalion Staff

ar produced by Halloween night is an exciting experience. For some residents, however, the murder of an Muhlenghaus has produced fear of a different nature.

Stories of rape, murder and threats have circulated widely over the past two weeks, and an uneasiness is prevalent.

Though police say the tales of rape and murder are false, the threats have become real to some people.

"Some of them are pranks," said College of Arts and Sciences Assistant Police Chief Edgar man, "and some are not. Probably, most of them are prank calls and such."

A Battalion story that ran Tuesday, man said he believed the circulating rumors were false, but many residents exception to this view.

"I believe we were on different wavelengths about this," Feldman said. "I certainly not saying people are making these up. I didn't mean there weren't pranks. I just think it's people playing pranks. People are actually getting notes."

The Battalion has received several reports of threats in the last two days.

One student reported she had received threats in the week beginning Oct. 21. One of the notes, she said, was written in ink on a plate-glass door. It referred to the Muhlenghaus murder, saying, "soon you will have fun like LaShan and me."

On another occasion, she reported finding a copy of the 45-record "Good Girls" on her doorstep, with "but you will not" added on the label of the record.

The woman said she believes the threats are real, saying, "The contents of the notes are sick enough that I don't think anyone would have done it."

Detectives are monitoring her apartment complex, the Viking apartments. Despite this surveillance, she said, the threatening caller still manages to place notes.

The detectives told us they file fake reports, she said, "and I think they're covering up quite a lot."

Feldman said he doesn't believe the murderer is leaving the notes, and denies that police are attempting a cover-up.

"We're not covering up anything," he said. "Every report we have received has been put up front on the desk and the media has seen them. Nothing has been hidden."

The story is not true at all — we're not withholding anything."

Another student reported a man came into her apartment Saturday, claiming to be a magazine salesman.

The man, she said, appeared to be 20 years old, clean-cut and very polite.

The man asked her several personal questions, she said, then left when she told him she didn't like his selling technique. He told her she was letting him down by not buying any magazines.

"He wouldn't tell me what company he was from or anything," she said. "He finally listed a company, but he couldn't verify that he worked for them, so I didn't want to buy anything from him."

The man returned a minute later, she said, and asked for a glass of water; then he proceeded to tell her about his life and the responsibilities of his job, saying, "I get as much drugs, sex and money out of it (the job) as I want."

During the conversation, the man said he was a violent person and asked her if he resembled the sketch of the suspect in the Muhlenghaus case.

The man said the police had questioned him about the murder.

He made a pass at her and then left her apartment, telling her he would "see her later."

The woman told police about the incident. The police, she said, told her to be on her guard.

Feldman said he wasn't familiar with the story because he doesn't get a chance to see every report.

"I have not read the reports," he said. "A lot goes by that I don't see."

W. Dee Kutach, an associate professor of sociology and an expert in criminal sociology, said he believes the rumors are a "collective reaction."

"In society, we have institutional networks of communication like the media," he said. "The media allegedly adheres to the journalistic codes of honesty and reliability. Individuals who read these materials are assuming these are reliable, credible statements."

Kutach said many institutions lack credibility in the public's eye, however.

"University police can say there are no rapes, but people see them as parking-ticket violation givers, so they lack credibility," he said. "No matter what you or I say or they say, the rumors are not going to lessen."

Kutach said a rumor begins with an event such as a murder, then becomes a collective reaction.

"People tend to discuss it more and more," he said. "As the rumor circulates, each individual can contribute what they want to contribute. The credibility of the rumor doesn't matter by this time. For example, a person will come up to a group of people and say, 'this is what I heard,' and the people will listen. People don't even know who these people are, but they will listen to them."

Kutach said if the murder had happened six months ago, the girl who was visited by the suspicious character probably wouldn't have thought much of it.

"She would have thought it was a real weird guy," he said, "but she wouldn't think of this guy as a murderer. You can hear anything you want."

Kutach terms the rumors' effect on people as "collective tension."

"When you have no other credible source of information or believable information," he said, "the typical citizen is going to react to a rumor on the emotional level or the gut feeling."

"For example, this past weekend, a girl did die, and she was an A&M student. Therefore, someone was half listening and thought the girl was murdered. There was enough credibility there. People pick up what suits them. The thing is, the message which is given out does not even come out the same."

"You seek answers from an institutional source, they don't have it, and ambiguity occurs."

Kutach said the person who would pull pranks on people by leaving notes and threats is simply seeking attention.

"Some individuals feel they are not getting enough recognition," he said. "He might be scaring a girl to get her reaction."

The threats, whether pranks or real, continue, and Kutach says he doesn't think it will end until a suspect is caught, identified and sent through the criminal processes.

Feldman said the police department is investigating the possibility of a connection between the Amarillo killing Friday night of Sarah Donn Lawrence, 30, and the Muhlenghaus case.

"There might be a connection," Feldman said. "We have some of our officers en route at this time. There are similarities, but you never know."

Fee hassle means no 'Knack' here

By TODD HEDGEPEATH
Battalion Reporter

The popular rock group The Knack will not play at Texas A&M University because of its asking price and its desire to play only in small halls, Town Hall Chairman Michelle Scudder says.

The group, whose first album "Get the Knack" topped the charts this summer, listed its fee as \$28,000. The group was being considered for an early November concert and would only have performed in Rudder Auditorium.

With production costs added, Scudder said Town Hall would have had to price tickets at \$15 apiece to simply break even (based on a predicted audience of 85 percent capacity in the 2,400 seat auditorium).

Scudder said charging that price for tickets was out of the question. She also said the \$28,000 fee wasn't standard for The Knack.

"They weren't getting that kind of money in other performances," Scudder said.

She also said the fee was too high for an "up-and-coming group" that hasn't established itself yet.

Scudder said The Knack had its reasons for wanting to perform in the auditorium.

"They're an up-and-coming group and that had a lot to do with it," she said. "Psychologically, selling out means a lot to them. They'd probably rather sell out in a 2,400-seat auditorium than perform to 7,000 in an 8,000-seat arena."

After Town Hall had stopped pursuing The Knack, Scudder said that the group's agent called back and made another offer, this time with a lower professional fee, for a concert on Oct. 27. But since the game that weekend was away, Scudder said the

date was unacceptable and Town Hall didn't pursue the offer.

The next Town Hall concert will be The Oak Ridge Boys on Nov. 16. That group was the Country Music Association's vocal group of the year in 1978. The show starts at 8 p.m. at G. Rollie White Coliseum with tickets priced at \$4.50, \$5.25 and \$5.75 on sale in the MSC Box Office.

Town Hall will also present the musical

vaudeville "Chicago" at 8:15 p.m. Nov. 26 in Rudder Auditorium. "Chicago" is a comedy about the late 1920s and features an excellent jazz score. It ran two-and-a-half years on Broadway and is currently appearing in major cities across the country. Ticket prices are \$4.75, \$6 and \$7.25 for students and \$5.75, \$7 and \$8.25 for the general public. They can be purchased at the MSC Box Office.

Town Hall in the black despite loss on last show

By LAURA CORTEZ
Battalion Reporter

Despite low attendance and a \$7,500 loss on its last concert, Town Hall is in "good financial shape," says Michelle Scudder, chairman of the organization.

Only 3,200 people attended the Pablo Cruise concert Oct. 20, and although Town Hall had to pay \$24,000 for the concert, it only brought in \$16,500.

But Scudder said the organization takes a risk when booking performances and plans for this in its budget.

She said \$13,000 was collected at the beginning of the semester from the sale of option passes, which entitles holders to first choice of tickets and to reserved seats, and this money is used "to fall back on."

"We realized that we would need it (the \$13,000) to supplement the cost of a show that might be a financial risk — the Pablo Cruise concert in particular," she said.

Scudder also said the organization receives \$44,000 from student service fees which helps with production costs.

Town Hall will sponsor four Broadway plays and at least four more concerts this school year, she said. She said she thinks money will be lost on one or two of the plays.

"Even though we might lose money on the plays, it is important that we provide this type of entertainment for the students," she said.

To date, Town Hall has sponsored two concerts in addition to Pablo Cruise.

Scudder said the Beach Boys concert cost \$55,000 and brought in \$56,200, and the Mel Tillis concert cost \$21,500 and earned \$22,300.

Fog may have caused DC-10 jet to crash land on closed runway

United Press International

MEXICO CITY — Confusion over two parallel runways sent 74 people to their deaths in the fiery crash of a Western Airlines DC-10 at the fog-shrouded Mexico City airport.

The approach lights are on runway 23-left. That runway is closed to traffic, the correct one is 23-right," the control tower had told Capt. Charles Gilbert, a 30-year veteran who also died in the crash.

"OK," the pilot responded before landing on 23-left, the parallel runway closed for repairs, and plowing into a string of buildings.

Western Airlines officials said 72 of the 88 people on board and two people on the ground died in the crash. A U.S. Embassy spokesman said 26 of the dead — and five of the survivors — were Americans.

Officials said the "black box" flight recording was recovered and a transcript of the final conversation with the control tower was released late Wednesday by Mexican Television's channel 2.

Bodies, many of them dismembered, and debris from the white-and-red jetliner that carried 75 passengers and 13 crewmen were scattered for hundreds of yards

around the Mexico City airport.

Thirty people were injured — some of them on the ground, including ground personnel and neighborhood residents hit by debris.

Investigators, aided by experts from the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration, worked through the night under floodlights at the crash site.

A Chicago-based ABC-TV producer, Kenneth Lucoff, a native of Milwaukee, was killed in the crash. ABC said Lucoff was on his way to El Salvador to cover the fighting in the Central American nation.

Also killed on the ground were an Eastern Airlines employee working in a building flattened by the plane and the driver of a truck hit by the plane at the top of runway 23-left, Western Airlines officials said.

"Everything seemed normal until the right side of the plane hit something," said one survivor, Alda Hoogland, 27, an agricultural engineer from the Netherlands.

"There must have been something on the runway. For a few moments we were free of the ground, and then we hit the ground again."

"I flew out of my seat with the seat belt

on. I landed on the runway upside down with the seat belt still on," said Hoogland, who suffered severe facial cuts.

"It touched down with the right tire. A lot of fire came out and the pilot tried to go up again but it was not possible so we turned right more and more, more dangerously, and then — a big explosion," said Alessandro Annibaldi, 22, of Italy.

The Mexican Transportation Ministry said the pilot "tried to land on the wrong runway," clipped a truck in which the dead truck driver was found, then headed for the correct runway to the right but swiped a building with his right wingtip.

In the final conversation, the tower told the pilot, who was making an instrument approach, "There are banks of fog," and also twice told him that 23-right was the correct runway for landing.

A spokesman for the control tower union, Roberto Kobeh, blamed the pilot for the crash. "It was a pilot error. It was not the control tower's fault."

A Western Airlines spokeswoman in Los Angeles said it was premature to comment on the allegation before a full investigation into the crash.

Freshman runoff results

| President | Vice Pres. | Sec. - Treas. | Social Sec. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Dan Stedham 601 | Mike Lawshe 604 | Diana Horadan 453 | Kathy Bartholomew 539 |
| Rocky Path 276 | Pam Baldwin 210 | Jeff Cantrell 419 | Cindy Smith 33 |