

Warped

By Scott McCullar

Nuke plants unsafe, Nader group says



United Press International
WASHINGTON — A Ralph Nader group has charged that a draft of a Nuclear Regulatory Commission study records 141 nuclear plant incidents that could have led to a meltdown between 1969 and 1979 — one of which was at Three Mile Island.

quires reporting of minor incidents, such as blown fuses, that are "significant only because they apply to a nuclear plant." He said between 2,500 and 3,500 such incidents are reported yearly.

reactor could cause an excessive temperature drop in water that cools the core. If heat is carried away too fast from a reactor, operators may have difficulty stopping the atomic chain reaction.

A meltdown, which did not occur at Three Mile Island, would occur if overheated reactor core fuel rods melted. Theoretically, the rods would then melt through the reactor base and into the ground, leading to a large, hazardous release of radioactivity.

According to the Oak Ridge draft report, almost all the incidents involve one of four accident scenarios:

●Loss of offsite power. When a nuclear plant must shut down, it relies on other plants — offsite electricity — to power its safety systems. If offsite power is lost, diesel generators at the nuclear plant are relied upon for backup power.

Richard Udell, a nuclear safety analyst for Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project, said the study showed "nuclear power plants are riddled with design errors and their operation plagued by equipment failures and human errors."

●Loss of main feedwater. In a nuclear reactor, feedwater flows into a reactor vessel, where heat turns it into steam to generate electricity. Feedwater also performs a safety function by removing heat from the reactor core. Loss of feedwater can lead to overheating of the core.

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●Loss of coolant, caused by a leak or valve problem, also can lead to overheating of the reactor core. At Three Mile Island, in Middletown, Pa., a coolant loss in 1979 damaged 90 percent of the uranium fuel reactor core.

●Steam line break. A break in the main steam line of a nuclear

The Jan. 15, 1981, study was done at the Oak Ridge, Tenn., National Laboratory for the NRC's Division of Systems Reliability Research.

The researchers screened 18,000 "events" — most of minor significance — reported by plant operators and gave 400 incidents a "detailed review."

According to the draft, "141 events were ... potential accident precursors (to severe core damage)." The incidents were distributed among 58 reactors, some of which are no longer operating.

Donald Winston, spokesman for the Atomic Industrial Forum, the main nuclear industry association, said the law re-

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Other nations do better in inflation-fight: report

United Press International
WASHINGTON — A congressional study says other nations are doing a better job than the United States in fighting inflation.

Congressional Research Service, examined the wage and price policies of Australia, Austria, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands and West Germany.

inflation and in avoiding "debilitating swings" in the Austrian economy.

learned from the Netherlands, the report said, is that control of inflation is less dependent on the government's power to set prices and wages than "on developing a consensus between employers and unions that their own best interest will be served by accepting the interrelation between wages and prices and by attempting to maintain a balance between them."

Joint Economic Committee Chairman Rep. Henry Reuss, D-Wis., said Monday "other industrialized nations have learned that a climate of cooperation and consensus in the fight against inflation is far superior to economic policy which fates millions of workers to unemployment lines."

Reuss said each country sought to have a wage and price policy that minimized the social and economic costs imposed by anti-inflation policies, which succeed by creating an economic slowdown and unemployment.

Canada, the report said, has alternated periods of voluntary policies with periods of mandatory controls and found controls "became increasingly unpopular the longer they lasted."

In West Germany, the report said, there is a greater "spirit of cooperation and trust" between management and labor than in many other countries — probably due in part to a "fear of social conflict" and in part to reconstruction born in "the need to rebuild the war-torn economy of the 1940s."

He said leaders of some nations "use all the tools available — ranging from the art of persuasion to outright wage and price controls — to keep inflation at an acceptable level."

Australia monitored prices and wages; it was only the use of compulsory arbitration that held down inflation and forestalled labor strife.

Japan's experience with inflation, the report said, appears to be the most interesting because it has been able to maintain "remarkable price stability" at the consumer level.

Perhaps the best lesson to be

The study, prepared by the

The report said Austria's Joint Commission on Wages and Prices went beyond controls to become "a system of economic and social partnership" that has been a major factor in damping

The island nation has supplemented traditional monetary tools with price controls and a system of labor relations that keeps wages in line with changes in productivity.

Labor Department bureaucrats sidelined, paid for no work

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration, at taxpayers' expense, has sidelined 19 highly paid career Labor Department policy experts in a move said designed to increase the number of political appointees in career jobs.

Donovan issued a directive requiring 16 of the officials to be transferred to new jobs June 28 — putting many of them in roles in which they have no expertise or prior experience.

fraction of its staff being people who are political appointees."

He said the transfers were necessary because the policy office's research role was trimmed and its staff reduced from 56 to 40.

The veteran bureaucrats have been assigned little or no work for the past nine months — at a cost to taxpayers of \$600,000.

Several of those involved charge the transfers are an illegal attempt by the administration to increase the number of political appointees in key posts.

At least one lawyer in the Office of Personnel Management and an aide to a House civil service subcommittee say it is improper and probably illegal to deny work assignments to career specialists.

Among those reassigned are two officers of Local 12 of the American Federation of Government Employees, representing 5,000 to 6,000 employees at the Labor Department's headquarters building.

One of the employees said he and several colleagues — paid \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year — spent much of their office time recently reading newspapers, phoning their stockbrokers or discussing their futures over coffee.

But Assistant Labor Secretary John Cogan argues the transfers were forced by a reorganization of the policy office and budget-cutting moves.

Cogan denied any political motivation, but said, "I want to say candidly that I do believe that a policy shop in any department should have at least some

Labor Secretary Raymond

Several employees, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals, said they got no response when they asked for work. One said he felt the administration doesn't trust the career officials to carry out its

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