

**NRC Criticizes Managers in Texas Office On Data for Comanche Peak Nuclear Unit *By Robert E. Taylor. Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Dec 12, 1986. pg. 1***

WASHINGTON -- Nuclear Regulatory Commission investigators found that managers in the commission's Texas regional office pressured agency inspectors to downgrade or delete findings of violations at the Comanche Peak nuclear power plant.

The NRC's Office of Inspector and Auditor also found that the regional office's reports on its own inspections were sometimes inaccurate or flatly false. Further, it concluded that the office's inspection of quality assurance programs at the Comanche Peak plant were inadequate and exacerbated weaknesses of the plant's oversight of its construction quality.

Though the report focused on shortcomings of the office's oversight of the troubled Comanche Peak power plant, it included suggestions that the problems may extend across the region. The Texas regional office oversees nuclear power facilities in four states.

In addition to Comanche Peak, several other troubled nuclear sites come under the office's jurisdiction. These include Middle South Utilities Inc.'s Grand Gulf and Waterford nuclear plants; Houston Lighting & Power Co.'s South Texas nuclear project; and Kerr McGee Corp.'s uranium processing plant near Gore, Okla., where a worker was killed in an incident early this year.

The report may compound the already well-publicized problems with construction quality that have delayed completion of Dallas-based Texas Utilities Co.'s Comanche Peak plant. The plant, originally scheduled to begin operating in 1980, currently is aiming for 1989 and the utility estimates its cost will reach \$6.7 billion.

Investigators concluded that it appears the region's quality assurance inspection effort couldn't be relied on "as evidence of the safe construction" of the plant, which is about 75 miles southwest of Dallas.

The report, however, said some officials believe that a heavily staffed NRC effort to review the plant's parts in recent years may enable the NRC to decide whether the plant should be licensed to operate.

The report cited NRC inspectors' allegations that they were harassed and intimidated by managers to downgrade or drop findings of deficiencies at Comanche Peak. The report found downgrading was often done for "faulty" reasons. It also said that managers rejected negative findings for lack of information without indicating what data were needed.

All names were censored from the report, which was first released by Rep. Markey. It quoted one unidentified person voicing the view that the regional office's management "did not want to create too many problems for the utility." Another said he thought the region's senior managers "didn't evidence a strong commitment to ensure conformance with regulations and did not take a tough attitude regarding enforcement."

NRC Chairman Lando Zech has requested recommendations based on the report from the NRC's executive director for operations and from its general counsel.

In Dallas, a Texas Utilities spokesman said the report "underlies the importance" of the company's continuing program to reinspect crucial parts of the plant. The reinspection program is largely responsible for the plant's series of delays and cost overruns.

The spokesman also said that without a complete study of the report, the company wouldn't know what it will do in response. "We just don't know what the implications would be, if any, to our program," the spokesman said.