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for Today and Tomorrow

Limerick Generating Station Reactor Operator Training Fact Sheet

- Nuclear plant operators receive more than 200 hours of training each year. Nearly half of their training is conducted in a full-scale electronic simulator of the control room.
- To become a plant operator and receive a Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) license, 18 months of intense initial training is required.
- Trainees spend 12 weeks in the classroom, 25 weeks in the control room simulator practicing various scenarios that are needed to manipulate the plant, and 16 weeks training inside the plant.
- At the end of 18 months, trainees must pass final examinations including an NRC administered written examination, a simulator examination and an in-plant examination to receive their NRC license.
- In addition to initial training, reactor operators spend one week training in the control room simulator for every five weeks spent on shift in the control room.
- In order to maintain their operating licenses, operators are required to take a written re-qualification NRC examination and operating tests. The NRC examination is administered every two years, while the operating tests are administered annually.
- Operators are trained to understand both the theoretical and practical aspects of plant operations. Operators are trained not only on procedures for anticipated operations, but also on understanding when they are beyond the bounds of procedures and how to respond.
- Operator training is focused on protecting the systems that protect the plant's core. The emergency procedures are symptom-based flow charts that ensure first that the reactor core remains covered with cooling water and then operators determine the specific problem.
- The Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) and its National Academy for Nuclear Training have been effective in promoting excellence in nuclear plant operations and accrediting nuclear training programs.
- The accreditation process covers operations, maintenance and technical training programs for all key positions at each plant. Each training program must renew its accreditation every four years.
- Nuclear operating companies have invested thousands of work hours and hundreds of millions of dollars into their training programs. In 1979, U.S. companies had only 12 control room simulators. Today, there are 72 in use with at least one at each nuclear energy plant site. The number of professional training personnel has jumped from 440 in 1979 to about 5,000 today, and the space dedicated exclusively to training has increased eightfold.


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LIMERICK GENERATING STATION

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- Employee training programs are among the most significant improvements to the nuclear industry. The lessons learned from former operating experiences produced a whole new approach to training employees.
 - The success of the industry's training programs can be measured by nuclear plant performance. Performance indicators for plant safety, efficiency and reliability have improved steadily in the past 20 years.
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