

# NORTH COUNTY NEWS

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## Indian Point suspends guard who took power nap

By Abby Luby



Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant in Buchanan

A security guard fell who asleep August 26 at Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant in Buchanan has been placed on administrative leave. The armed guard was stationed at a second command post where workers are x-rayed for explosives and their hands electronically identified.

“The guard started work at 6 a.m and was found asleep at around 2 p.m.,” said Neil Sheehan of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Plant owner Entergy Nuclear confirmed that the slumbering guard hadn’t compromised any security, according to Sheehan. “They checked their logs and video tapes for this.”

Sheehan said the NRC has been working on changing the rules on how many hours guards could work in a day. “Fatigue is an issue we have been taking very seriously for a long time,” said Sheehan. “We have revised our regulations but the 12-hour shift is permissible as long as Entergy is providing the proper breaks.” Sheehan added there was no excuse for a guard in a key capacity to be inattentive.

“We’ve worked with fatigue experts, issued the regulations,” he said. “The commission voted on that and they came out with new guidelines with the expectation to reduce workers’ fatigue. Sheehan said the NRC will need to know other circumstances about the guard’s schedule such as his usual work week and if he had any days off before Sunday.

According to Sheehan, an onsite NRC inspector found the sleeping guard. David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists, who works with plant fatigue issues, said Entergy supervisors aren’t policing their own staff. “It’s always the NRC that finds the guard asleep, which means Entergy is looking the other way.” Lochbaum added that Entergy increased the hours for guards after 9/11.

According to Entergy spokesperson Jim Steets the guard has been employed at the plant for five years. “We tested him for drugs and alcohol, and the alcohol test came out negative,” he said. “The guard has been placed on administrative leave and ultimately some determination will be made about his employment.”

The secondary command is down the road from the main security gate, the first entry point to plant grounds. The post where the guard fell asleep has x-ray capabilities and a caged turnstile that admits plant employees only when hand identification matches their badges. Bob Bliston, a 30-year Buchanan resident who lives five miles from the Indian Point plant, said he wasn’t worried. “I feel sorry for those guards who sit there for 12 hours with nobody coming in or out and nothing to do. If there was a terrorist alert I’m sure he would have been awake.”

But Phil Musegas of the environmental group Riverkeeper working to shut the plant down, said “There’s no excuse for this type of security breach. We expect the NRC to launch an investigation and find out what went wrong.”

Museegas noted that Indian Point is a high profile plant where security is imperative. “This was the plant that terrorists flew over on 9-11 and is still an enhanced target for terrorists.”