

N368. Taking In The Sites

Utilities find that touring other locations is an effective way to collect useful ideas.

Hatch, Commonwealth Edison's Byron Station and Houston Lighting & Power Company's South Texas Project Electric Generating Station are examples of the growing number of utilities that recognize the benefits of tapping into the existing pool of nuclear plant knowledge.

Improving outages and minimizing paperwork are popular topics for exchange visits. This should free up the operators to focus more on the real work and less on recording a bunch of low-value administrative readings. Exchange teams usually come home with more than they expected. For instance, when a travel team from Hatch visited Brunswick to study communications, they discovered that Brunswick's operators receive their simulator evaluation results more quickly than do operators at Hatch. They also noticed the master annunciator silence button in Brunswick's control room. Both items are currently being studied for application at Hatch. Individual team members also benefit from participation in operator exchange visits. Not only does it broaden their professional experience, it improves morale and can have a positive effect on their day-to-day work.

The success of these trips has prompted utilities to begin looking overseas and even outside the nuclear industry for useful operating experience. South Texas sent an eight-man team on a two-week tour of European nuclear plants in September 1994. They have made stops in Belgium, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Spain.

In the long run, the underlying importance of every exchange visit is in its contribution to the entire industry.

For more, "Taking in the Sites," pp.3-6, The Nuclear Professional, Spring 1995. For further information, contact Terry Moore, Hatch, Phone: 912/537-1395.