

## TMI guard's video game takes priority

*That's the problem with a boring task but it doesn't excuse it. However a guard is not an operator.*

Associated Press  
May 30, 2006

A security guard at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant was so absorbed in playing a hand-held video game that he failed to see an inspector approach during a surprise inspection, the agency said.

The employee did not violate any rules as guards are allowed to engage in mind-stimulating activities, the state Department of Environmental Protection said.

But the alleged lapse -- which follows five other reports of employee inattention in the past two years -- is prompting officials to review current policies.

"The issue is not the guard's use of the video game," Kathleen McGinty, secretary of the environmental agency, said in a statement.

"The real issue is that his complete absorption in the game distracted him from noticing the repeated approach of our inspector. And that shows why this procedure needs to be changed and these video games disallowed," she said.

The state agency will work with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and nuclear plant operators to review policies after the latest inspection, which was first reported by The Patriot-News of Harrisburg in Saturday editions.

The department's nuclear safety staff conducted a surprise check between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. Friday at the Dauphin County plant. The guard did respond properly to a radio check while the inspector was present, McGinty said.

The guard's only responsibility is to respond to radio checks and be ready to take action if necessary, the agency said.

Gov. Ed Rendell sanctioned the off-hour surprise checks in February at each of the state's five nuclear power plants after public concerns emerged over reports of employee inattentiveness at Three Mile Island.

AmerGen Energy, the company that operates Three Mile Island, had reassigned a shift manager suspected of sleeping on the job.

Three Mile Island, about 10 miles southeast of Harrisburg, was the site of the nation's worst nuclear accident when a partial meltdown occurred in 1979.