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April 13, 2000

Mr. Hubert J. Miller, Regional Administrator
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
475 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1415

**SUBJECT: REACTOR CORE ISOLATION COOLING SYSTEM PROBLEM AT THE
JAMES A. FITZPATRICK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

Dear Mr. Miller:

NRC Daily Event Report 36757 reported, and then retracted, a problem with the reactor core isolation cooling (RCIC) system at the FitzPatrick nuclear power plant:

A RCIC flow control irregularity was identified during quarterly RCIC surveillance testing. Upon reaching the required flow rate of 400 gpm, RCIC flow dipped to approximately 360 gpm for 1 - 2 minutes before stabilizing at 400 gpm. Engineering is evaluating this condition. In the interim, the RCIC system has been declared inoperable. The plant is in a 7-day [technical specification limiting condition for operation (LCO)].

The licensee plans to notify the NRC resident inspector.

* * * UPDATE AT 1357 ON 4/12/00, BY ABRAMSKI RECEIVED BY WEAVER * * *

The plant's licensing department has reviewed this event and determined that it is not reportable. The RCIC system is not required by the plant accident analysis. The licensee notified the NRC resident inspector. The operations center notified the R1DO (Reber).

The basis for retracting this event is not clear to UCS. The RCIC system, while not taken credit for in the plant's analyses of design bases accidents, is nevertheless an important safety system. It is required to be operable by the plant's Technical Specifications. It was, in fact, the entry in the limiting condition for operation (LCO) action statement for the RCIC system that prompted NYPA to make the report in the first place. Furthermore, the RCIC system is taken credit for in NYPA's coping assessment, or analysis, of the station blackout (SBO) event. That analysis was required by Section 50.63 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations. While a SBO event technically may not be considered a design basis accident, it is clearly a licensing basis event for this licensee. If the RCIC system does not function during a station blackout event at FitzPatrick, the consequences can be as nasty as from any design bases accident.

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The RCIC system problem at FitzPatrick may not be reportable. But the information provided in this Daily Event Report does allow such a determination to be made. UCS respectfully requests that the NRC Resident Inspector at FitzPatrick investigate the RCIC problem and how it was evaluated for reportability by NYPA. UCS would appreciate feedback from the NRC following this investigation. If the investigation is documented in an Inspection Report, then a short letter alerting us to the Inspection Report number would suffice.

Sincerely,



David A. Lochbaum
Nuclear Safety Engineer