

March 2, 2001

Mr. David A. Lochbaum
Nuclear Safety Engineer
Union of Concerned Scientists
1707 H Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Lochbaum:

By letter dated May 3, 2000, you submitted a petition pursuant to Section 2.206 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR 2.206), which requested that the NRC address your contention that the Hatch plant was being operated outside its design and licensing bases because the material condition of piping, tanks, and other components of the liquid and gaseous radwaste systems were not being properly inspected and maintained. Your petition also requested that the NRC issue a Demand for Information to the licensee. In that letter, you also requested that the NRC issue a generic communication on potential aging degradation of radwaste systems, and that 10 CFR Parts 51 and 54 be revised to include aging management for liquid and gaseous radwaste systems.

The staff responded to your 2.206 petition in a letter to you from Samuel J. Collins dated October 18, 2000, which enclosed the Director's Decision. The Director's Decision explained why the staff did not agree with your contention that Hatch was being operated outside its design and licensing bases. Your request to revise 10 CFR Parts 51 and 54 was noticed in the *Federal Register* on July 10, 2000 (65 FR 42305). Our assessment of your request is being conducted using our established process and will be completed by July 10, 2001. Following is our response to your request that NRC issue a generic communication.

The Director's Decision explained the following factors: radwaste systems are not needed to mitigate the effects of an accident and, therefore, are not considered safety related; licensee operations personnel perform daily rounds during which systems are observed for proper operation and material conditions; and that NRC inspectors also regularly tour the plant which includes the areas in which the radwaste systems are located. In addition, analysis by the NRC staff showed that the consequences of a potential simultaneous failure of all liquid radwaste tanks would result in releases which would be a small fraction of the 10 CFR Part 20 release limits. In short, the consequences of a failure of radwaste systems are of low safety significance and the likelihood of identifying system component degradation before such a failure is high due to the frequent inspections by licensee plant staff and NRC inspectors.

The staff has not noted any industry-wide problems with degradation of radwaste systems that are not being handled through existing licensee inspection and maintenance programs. Therefore, we do not believe a generic communication is needed at this time. However, in the future, if we note any increases in the likelihood of radwaste system failures due to degradation of the system components or note an increase in effluent releases or occupational exposure to plant employees that could be attributed to radwaste system degradation, we will revisit the need for a generic communication.

Sincerely,

/RA/

John A. Zwolinski, Director
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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John A. Zwolinski, Director
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