

October 15, 2001

Nedra K. Kersey
Nuclear Licensing & Operating Experience Dept.
Virgil C. Summer Nuclear Station
Post Office Box 88
Jenkinsville, SC 29065

Dear Ms. Kersey:

On September 24, 2001, you sent an email to the NRC to determine whether any nuclear plants have sought to abandon their on-site meteorological towers and utilize the National Weather Service (NWS) in lieu of Regulatory Guide (R.G.) 1.23 on-site meteorological monitoring programs and whether such a request would be granted.

We are not aware of any commercial nuclear power plant in the U.S. that does not have a meteorological measurement system under its direct control. Nuclear power plants rely on their on-site meteorological measurement program to meet a number of regulatory objectives. Among these for an operating plant is to ensure that license holders can assess and monitor actual or potential off-site consequences of a radiological emergency condition. Regulatory guidance has been provided in R.G. 1.101 and NUREG-0654 regarding the methods, systems, and equipment needed to meet this requirement. Additional guidance is provided in R.G. 1.97 regarding the minimum set of meteorological parameters and in R.G. 1.23 for the equipment specifications.

We expect that license holders understand that information gathered by the NWS was never intended to meet NRC regulatory requirements; NWS weather data serves a different purpose and is collected or derived in a manner different from NRC regulatory needs. The NRC has accepted licensee plans to use NWS data (or other data source) as a backup under limited circumstances should its on-site meteorological program be unavailable (e.g., for preventative maintenance); this is a compensatory measure and was never intended to be used in lieu of a primary system. This is permitted once a licensee has established the relationship between the site and the other source since meteorological conditions vary over time and space. On-site meteorological information is used in performing assessments that influence the design of the plant, the operation of the plant, and the response to off-normal events at the plant.

Please feel free to contact me at 301-415-1391 if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ramin R. Assa, Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-395

cc: See next page

Mr. Stephen A. Byrne
South Carolina Electric & Gas Company

VIRGIL C. SUMMER NUCLEAR STATION

cc:

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