

November 26, 2001

Alex Marion
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL FOR PLUGGED STEAM GENERATOR TUBES TO IMPACT THE
INTEGRITY OF ACTIVE TUBES

Dear Mr. Marion:

Recent events at Three Mile Island Unit 1 (TMI-1) illustrate an effect where a plugged steam generator tube can sever and affect nearby adjacent tubes to a point where the active tubes no longer meet established structural performance criteria. Given the potential risk significance of degradation of steam generator tubes and the potential generic applicability of the TMI-1 occurrence to all types of steam generators, the purpose of this letter is to solicit your support in organizing technical and management meetings between the nuclear industry, including the pressurized water reactor (PWR) owner's groups, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). These meetings would serve to facilitate discussions on what actions, if any, the industry plans on taking in response to the TMI-1 experience. A member of my staff held preliminary discussions with you on this during a phone call on November 19, 2001. Our internal processes direct us to initiate early interaction with the nuclear power industry as a first step when evaluating potential generic issues. This process is discussed in detail in SECY-99-0143, "Revisions to Generic Communication Program."

I understand that Mr. Jim Riley of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) was present at a meeting between the NRC and AmerGen Energy Company, LLC (AmerGen), the licensee for TMI-1, on November 9, 2001, in which many of the details of the TMI-1 experience were discussed. Furthermore, it is my understanding that this issue is on the agenda for discussion at the meeting between the NRC staff and the NEI Steam Generator Executive Committee scheduled for November 28, 2001. In addition to this meeting, a technical level meeting should be arranged between the industry and the NRC technical staff. Given the potential significance of this issue, I would like this meeting to occur in the next few weeks.

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff. The contact for organizing the technical level meeting is Joe Birmingham. Mr. Birmingham can be reached at 301-415-2829.

Sincerely,

/ra/

Brian W. Sheron
Associate Director for Project Licensing
and Technical Analysis
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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