

June 11, 2002

Mr. Raymond A. Rusnak
3055 Manhasset
Bay Village, OH 44140

Dear Mr. Rusnak:

I am responding on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letter of April 30, 2002, regarding your concerns of safety issues and the adequacy of NRC oversight prompted by the recent discovery of the degraded reactor pressure vessel (RPV) head at FirstEnergy's Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station (Davis-Besse). In your letter you requested the NRC to shutdown Davis-Besse until a new head is fabricated. I would like to express my appreciation for your effort in bringing your concerns to the attention of the NRC.

The NRC is taking significant regulatory action prompted by the discovery of RPV head degradation at Davis-Besse. The NRC has established a special oversight panel to coordinate the agency's activities in assessing the performance problems associated with the corrosion damage to the RPV head. The oversight panel includes NRC management personnel and staff from the Region III office in Lisle, Illinois, the NRC Headquarters office in Rockville, Maryland, and the NRC Resident Inspector Office at the Davis-Besse site. The oversight activities are conducted under the agency's Inspection Manual Chapter 0350, which establishes the procedures to be followed for the oversight of utility performance for plants that are shut down as a result of significant performance problems or events. The panel will hold public meetings periodically with FirstEnergy representatives to review the status of activities associated with the corrosion damage. These meetings will normally be held in the vicinity of the Davis-Besse plant. The objective of the panel is to provide the required oversight throughout the shutdown and restart of the facility to ensure that the plant would safely operate in accordance with the NRC rules and requirements, and that there is reasonable assurance for the protection of public health and safety. The plant will not restart until the NRC is satisfied that all current safety concerns have been resolved.

The NRC has also created a Davis-Besse RPV Head Degradation Lessons Learned Task Force (LLTF) to conduct an independent evaluation of the NRC staff's regulatory processes related to assuring reactor vessel head integrity. This team consists of NRC managers and staff who are not routinely associated with the Davis-Besse plant. The team officially commenced its review activities on June 2, 2002, and expects to issue a report detailing its observations, conclusions, and recommendations by September 3, 2002. Additional information about both the 0350 Panel and LLTF efforts is publicly available on the NRC's Web site via the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Public Electronic Reading Room under Accession Numbers ML021230683 and ML021370684, respectively.

R. Rusnak

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Additionally, the licensee is taking action to provide for independent oversight of actions related to the RPV head degradation. We believe that all of these efforts will provide information to adequately resolve the outstanding Davis-Besse safety issues and associated concerns.

The licensee has also decided to replace the damaged RPV head rather than repair it, which should satisfy your concerns about the proposed repair plan. Thank you for bringing your concerns to the attention of the NRC.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Anthony J. Mendiola, Chief, Section 2
Project Directorate III
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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