December 3, 2002

Mr. Jay Zimmerman
New York State Department of Public Service
3 Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223

Dear Mr. Zimmerman:

On October 30, 2002, you sent me a letter concerning the 1997 inspections at Indian Point 2. Specifically you were requesting NRC assistance in obtaining information as to probe selection for the steam generator tube inspections performed at Indian Point Unit 2 in 1997. As a point of information, from a process standpoint, the NRC would request the information through the licensee rather than directly to the licensee's contractor/vendor. The licensee is responsible to oversee its contractors/vendors, and the NRC oversees this activity.

In your letter, you observed that you feel it is imperative to establish whether magnetically biased probes (which are specifically designed to suppress signal interferences caused by ferromagnetic regions) were used at Indian Point 2 in 1997. As you may be aware, the magnetically biased probe is only good at removing permeability effects from materials that have a low saturation magnetization, such as cold worked Alloy 600 has. For magnetite, which has a saturation magnetization of about 6000 gauss, it would have little effect.

At Indian Point 2, magnetite deposits on the tubes, along with the copper, partially contributed to the large noise signals which interfered with the detection of the flaws. As such, regardless of whether there are ambiguities, if not outright discrepancies, in the Westinghouse and Con Edison documentation regarding the probes used, it is not clear that the use of the magnetically biased probe (in and of itself) would have prevented the tube rupture. Contributing factors to the February 15, 2000, tube rupture are discussed in many NRC references including a technical evaluation report dated October 10, 2000 (refer to ADAMS Accession numbers ML003759189 and ML003759165). Given the foregoing discussion, the NRC does not see a need to pursue with the licensee the information you have requested.

I appreciate you bringing this matter to my attention; however, our evaluation of the information you provided would not appear to alter any conclusions made regarding Indian Point 2.

Sincerely,

/RA/

A. Louise Lund, Chief
Steam Generator Integrity & Chemical Engineering
Materials & Chemical Engineering Branch
Division of Engineering

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