

November 14, 2003

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
Member, United States
House of Representatives
3120 Federal Building
100 State Street
Rochester, NY 14614

Dear Congresswoman Slaughter:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing to respond to your letter dated October 3, 2003, regarding sources of electrical power for the Ginna Nuclear Power Plant (Ginna) located in Ontario, New York. Your letter requested assistance in responding to your constituent, Ms. Henrietta Levine, regarding the adequacy of backup power sources in the event of a power outage or blackout, such as the one recently experienced in the Northeast.

NRC regulations set high standards for safety at nuclear power plants. These regulations employ a defense-in-depth philosophy which ensures high quality in design, construction, and operation of nuclear power plants and requires redundant safety systems that reduce the chances that malfunctions will lead to accidents. Nuclear power plants are required to have both onsite and offsite electric power sources to provide power to essential safety equipment during normal plant operations and in the event of an emergency. In the event of a loss of offsite power, the onsite emergency power sources provide backup power to equipment required to safely shut down the plant.

At Ginna, offsite power is supplied by two physically independent circuits from the transmission network. These circuits are the normal power sources to onsite safety equipment. In the event of a failure of both offsite power sources, Ginna has two independent and redundant emergency diesel generator (EDG) systems, as well as two completely separate and independent station battery systems. The redundant EDGs and station batteries are located in two separate rooms within buildings that are designed to protect against the effects of natural phenomena such as earthquakes, tornados and hurricanes. Each of these systems is designed to provide sufficient capacity and capability to ensure that the reactor core is cooled and containment integrity is maintained in the event of postulated accidents, including a loss of all offsite power sources. Therefore, Ginna meets all applicable NRC requirements with respect to backup and emergency power sources. These design features enabled Ginna to successfully respond to the grid disturbances that occurred on August 14, 2003. The reactor shut down, as designed, due to the grid disturbance and the EDGs provided the power necessary to operate the safety systems.

L. Slaughter

- 2 -

We appreciate Ms. Levine's interest in NRC requirements for backup and emergency power sources and in the safety of the Ginna facility. I hope you find the information in this letter useful in responding to her concern. If you have any further questions, please contact Dennis K. Rathbun, Director, Office of Congressional Affairs, at 301-415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

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