

February 20, 2004

Mr. H. B. Barron
Executive Vice President
Nuclear Generation
Duke Energy Corporation
526 South Church St
Charlotte, NC 28201-1006

SUBJECT: CATAWBA NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2 - REQUEST FOR
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RE: MIXED OXIDE LEAD FUEL ASSEMBLIES
(TAC NOS. MB7863 AND MB7864)

Dear Mr. Barron:

By letter dated February 27, 2003, you submitted an application for amendments to the operating licenses for Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2. The proposed amendments would revise the Technical Specifications to allow the use of four mixed oxide (MOX) fuel assemblies at the Catawba station. The purpose of this letter is to request additional information in support of our evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposed action.

We understand that Duke has selected the Catawba facility as its preferred alternative for the irradiation of the four MOX fuel lead test assemblies. Nevertheless, both McGuire and Oconee could potentially achieve the same outcome. Please provide an assessment that evaluates McGuire, and also Oconee, as alternative facilities for the irradiation of the MOX lead test assemblies and your rationale for determining that neither would be preferable to Catawba.

As you have stated, the Department of Energy (DOE) proposes to send a portion of the irradiated MOX fuel rods to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory for post-irradiation examination. We understand that the remaining rods are to be stored on-site at the Catawba facility until they can be disposed of in a permanent high-level waste repository. Provide information discussing the feasibility of an alternative that results in DOE transportation offsite of all of the irradiated MOX fuel rods that are expected to result from the MOX lead test assembly program at the Catawba facility. Also, provide information assessing the differential impacts that would be expected from this alternative compared to those expected as a result of your proposed action.

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We discussed this issue with your staff on February 18, 2004. Please provide a response at the earliest practical time in order that we may continue our review. Please contact me at (301) 415-1493, if you have any other questions on this issue.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Robert E. Martin, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-413 and 50-414

cc: See next page

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Catawba Nuclear Station

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Catawba Nuclear Station

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