Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

March 31, 2005

Mr. A. Randolph Blough, Director – Division of Reactor Projects
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission Region I
475 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1415

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A PUBLIC MEETING BEFORE RESTART OF THE HOPE CREEK GENERATING STATION**

Dear Mr. Blough:

On January 12, 2005, you and a large contingent of NRC staffers conducted a public meeting in the vicinity of the Hope Creek Generating Station. The major topics on the agenda for this public meeting were (a) to communicate the results from the NRC's special inspection into the October 10, 2004, steam pipe break at Hope Creek and (b) to communicate the results from the NRC's evaluation of the "B" recirculation pump vibration problems. Regarding the second topic, the NRC's presentation was documented in a letter dated January 10, 2005, from the NRC to the licensee (available in ADAMS under ML050100194 and distributed during the meeting). The third paragraph in Enclosure 1 to that NRC letter read:

> *In addition to the pump vibrations, there are vibrations on the associated RR [reactor recirculation] and RHR [residual heat removal] system piping which have resulted in damage to system sub-components (MOV handwheel and limit switches).* ***To date none of the vibration-induced component problems have rendered any safety-related system inoperable****. [emphasis added]*

The recent shut down of the Hope Creek reactor to repair a "3 inch through wall flaw at the welded junction of the 4 inch diameter decon port and the 28 inch diameter 'B' Reactor Recirculation Systems pump suction piping" (NRC Daily Event Report No. 41536 dated March 28, 2005) undermines the basis for the NRC's decision to allow Hope Creek to operate until its next refueling outage with a badly vibrating "B" recirculation pump. Even if the pipe flaw was not initiated by the chronic vibration problems, it is difficult to contend that the high vibration levels did not hasten the growth of the crack and ultimate failure of the reactor coolant pressure boundary. The NRC staff explained during the public meeting in December and again in the January meeting that the "B" recirculation pump is non-safety related but that it has the safety related function of remaining intact as part of the reactor coolant boundary. It has now failed that safety related function.

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If the NRC intends to allow the Hope Creek reactor to restart from its current outage without replacing the "B" recirculation pump shaft, we respectfully request that the NRC conduct another public meeting in the vicinity of the plant prior to restart. The public deserves to be updated on why what appears to be a "clear and present danger" is not clear and/or not present and/or not a danger from the NRC's perspective. In other words, the public deserves to hear the NRC's revised rationale for allowing continued "shake and break" operation at Hope Creek.

Sincerely,

David Lochbaum
Nuclear Safety Engineer
Washington Office