

March 25, 2008

Mr. Ashok S. Bhatnagar
Senior Vice President
Nuclear Generation Development and Construction
Tennessee Valley Authority
1101 Market Street
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402-2801

SUBJECT: BELLEFONTE UNITS 3 AND 4 COMBINED LICENSE APPLICATION REVIEW
SCHEDULE

Dear Mr. Bhatnagar:

This letter informs you that the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff will be reevaluating the Bellefonte Units 3 and 4 Combined License application (COLA) review schedule in the July 2008 time frame. The NRC staff previously provided a review schedule to you in a February 15, 2008, letter. Since the issuance of the February 15, 2008, letter, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has delayed when it would provide information necessary for the NRC staff to conduct the seismology and hydrology reviews.

In the February 15, 2008, schedule letter, we stated that our intent is to establish a predictable schedule that identifies and resolves complex issues as early in the review process as possible. This is why early and substantial interactions with TVA in Phase 1 of the safety review, regarding seismology and hydrology, were modeled in the Bellefonte COLA schedule. We also identified in the February 15, 2008, letter that the sections of Chapter 2 associated with hydrology and seismology are on the critical path for the review.

The February 15, 2008, schedule letter stated that the staff intended to issue an overarching Request for Additional Information (RAI) that will be based on the seismology issue described in the January 18, 2008, Bellefonte COLA acceptance letter. The staff issued this RAI in a February 15, 2008, letter. The February 15, 2008, RAI letter requested that TVA respond to the RAI by March 20, 2008. TVA has indicated to the staff that critical portions of the RAI response will not be provided to the staff until May 14, 2008. This date is approximately two months later than what the staff assumed in developing the February 15, 2008, schedule.

Regarding the hydrology review, the staff also identified near term milestones in the February 15, 2008, schedule. These milestones included an inspection of the hydrology code in February 2008, a site visit in April 2008, review of a white paper to be provided by TVA in April 2008, and a model workshop to be provided by TVA in May 2008. The staff performed an inspection the week of February 19 through February 22, 2008. The inspection identified three violations which are documented in the inspection report dated March 19, 2008. As a result of the inspection, TVA developed a revised plan for the hydrology review. This revised plan was provided to the staff in a March 14, 2008, letter. In the March 14, 2008, letter TVA requested staff feedback on the technical plan and the schedule impact.

The staff acknowledges TVA's technical approach as outlined in TVA's March 14, 2008, letter. The staff will review the technical adequacy of TVA's approach as part of the staff's safety review of the Bellefonte COLA. Regarding the review schedule, the revised hydrology review plan includes a working visit the week of June 23, 2008, to discuss the hydrology code. The June 23, 2008, date is approximately six weeks later than the May interaction that the staff assumed in developing the February 15, 2008, schedule. In addition, because of issues identified during the inspection, the staff believes that only a limited amount of review of the hydrology portion of the Bellefonte COLA can be performed prior to the June 23, 2008, workshop. The staff expects that in July 2008 it will have had a chance to consider the results of the June 23, 2008, workshop.

After receipt of the additional information for the seismology and hydrology reviews the staff will re-evaluate the Bellefonte COLA safety review schedule. Any delay in the hydrology review or seismology review will have an impact on the overall Bellefonte safety review schedule, which is the reference COLA for the AP1000 design. The February 15, 2008, schedule letter includes milestones for the first three phases of the safety review for Chapter 2 of the staff's safety evaluation report (SER), which are later than for the rest of the Chapters of the SER. However, this bifurcation of the schedule stops at Phase 4, "Advanced SER with no open items" of the review. The staff's reasoning for not providing separate milestones in Phase 4 of the review for Chapter 2 is because of the potential impact that the results of the Chapter 2 review could have on other SER chapters. Therefore, the schedule reflects issuance of the Chapter 2 SER with open items before beginning Phase 4 of the review for all parts of the application.

Should you have any questions regarding the safety review, please contact Joseph Sebrosky, the lead project manager for the safety review for the Bellefonte COL application, at (301) 415-1132 or jms3@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Thomas A. Bergman, Deputy Director
for Licensing Operations
Division of New Reactor Licensing
Office of New Reactors

Docket Nos. 52-014, 52-015

cc w/encl: See next page

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