

Watts Bar

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U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
of the
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 1986

The Honorable Nunzio Palladino
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On September 17, 1985, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff released a Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) report pertaining to the Watts Bar Nuclear Plant. Among the SALP report's findings were:

The installation of safety related cables, raceways, and terminations that were examined by the NRC were found to conform to drawings and procedures and indicated that proper procedures and equipment were being followed and used. (Section F.1.)

This statement conflicts with various findings of the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) and the TVA Nuclear Safety Review Staff (NSRS) which found deficiencies in cable installation procedures. INPO stated in its June 20, 1985 Field Notes pertaining to Watts Bar:

Cable pulling and cable protection activities are not always conducted in accordance with procedures. As a result cables are subject to potential damage. (p. 8.)

Raceway and electrical installations do not meet design or site procedural requirements. Deficiencies were noted in the installation of flexible conduit, tray splicing plates, fastener tightness, and equipment identification. (p. 9.)

The NSRS concluded in its July 8, 1985 report, I-85-06-WBN, that cable installation procedures were deficient and that cable installation at Watts Bar was indeterminate. Among other things, NSRS stated that:

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II

The Honorable Nunzio Palladino

March 19, 1986

Page 2

The NSRS investigation substantiated that there were significant and fundamental problems with establishing, implementing, and enforcing QA/QC program requirements for cabling activities. The areas identified below, inadequate or incomplete design standards, and/or construction specifications as well as failure to responsively resolve the identified problems, have resulted in an indeterminate cable installation at WBN. The existence of these conditions will not provide assurance that the cable system will be capable of performing the intended functions during the life of the plant for all postulated events and conditions. (p. 2.)

The NSRS report also stated that "... there was reasonable doubt whether WBN unit 1 could be shown to meet the licensing commitment for full power operation if it were so challenged." (p. 73.) With respect to the QA organization verification of cable program activities, I-85-06-WBN stated: "In summary, the OE [Office of Engineering] QA verification program for electrical design activities was determined to be totally inadequate." (p. 75.) With respect to construction QA, I-85-06-WBN concluded: "In summary the CQAB [Construction Quality Assurance Branch] surveillance program was effectively identifying problems with the cable program, but was inconsistent in assuring that appropriate, effective resolution was accomplished, thereby producing ineffectiveness of the conducted surveillances." (p. 76.)

The above-mentioned SALP, INPO, and NSRS reports, and inconsistencies between the SALP findings on the one hand, and the NSRS and INPO findings on the other, raise the following questions:

1. What review of the foregoing statements from the above-referenced NSRS and INPO reports were conducted prior to preparation of the SALP report? Since issuance of the SALP report on September 17, 1985 what reviews has NRC conducted of cable installation procedures problems have been conducted? What are the results of any such reviews? Have NRC technical staff met with the author of I-85-06-WBN?
2. Does NRC staff disagree with the foregoing statements from the above-referenced NSRS and INPO reports? If so, what is the basis for such disagreement? Where is the analysis that leads to the SALP conclusion notwithstanding the NSRS and INPO findings?

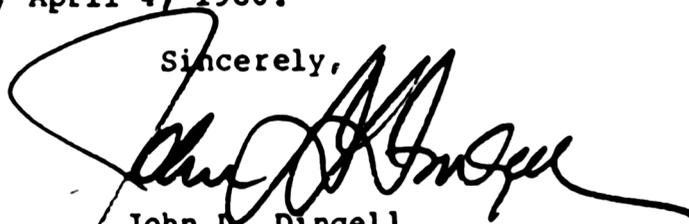
II

The Honorable Nunzio Palladino
March 19, 1986
Page 3

3. Has TVA complied with the Commission's requirements per 10 CRF 50.55e and other applicable regulations in reporting deficiencies of the kind described in the above-referenced NSRS and INPO reports? Where are any such reports documented?
4. What is the NRC's position with respect to whether TVA's cable installation procedures comply with NRC regulations?
5. What reviews and/or inspections have been conducted by NRC to determine whether TVA's cable installation procedures have been and are adequate to protect against exceeding limits on bend radius and pull tension?
6. In what manner did TVA report to NRC findings stated in I-85-06-WBN? Was I-85-06-WBN provided to NRC prior to its being described in the Knoxville Journal on July 18, 1985?
7. What was the basis for TVA lifting of the Stop Work Order (SWO) on cable installation at Watts Bar? Was NRC informed of this action? Were documents provided the NRC justifying the lifting of the SWO?
8. What was the basis for any TVA closure of this issue? Does NSRS concur in any such closure? Does NRC believe TVA's closure of the issue was proper?
9. What efforts are being undertaken to determine whether the Environmental Qualification of cable is maintained for cables installed without adhering to limits on bend radius and pull tension?

Please provide answers to these questions by the close of business on Friday, April 4, 1986.

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Chairman
Subcommittee on

Oversight and Investigations

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