

May 16, 2011

Ms. Alana Wolfe
1960 Donna Avenue
Los Osos, CA 93402

Dear Ms. Wolfe:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of March 17, 2011, to Chairman Jaczko via Ms. Catina Gibbs, which expressed your concerns regarding earthquake faults near the Diablo Canyon Power Plant in Avila Beach, California. Let me begin by assuring you that our ongoing reactor oversight process leads us to conclude that U.S. plants, including the California plant of concern in your letter, continue to operate safely.

In regard to the NRC's reactor oversight process, we consider seismic hazards to be an ongoing regulatory concern; therefore, we address seismic hazards issues whenever a significant change is recognized, as part of our continuous oversight of operating reactors. As an integral facet of the oversight process, the NRC maintains highly skilled Resident Inspectors at all U.S. plants, including Diablo Canyon, who monitor and inspect the facility on a daily basis. Should the NRC become aware at any time of information calling into question the continued safe operation of any plant, Diablo Canyon included, the NRC will take the appropriate actions as part of the agency's ongoing safety oversight. In short, with respect to safety concerns, the NRC does not wait to evaluate and address new information associated with seismic issues.

As mentioned in your letter, the Shoreline Fault is one such seismic hazard issue that has been the subject of previous and ongoing NRC staff evaluation based on identified new information. The following is a review of NRC staff activities related to the Shoreline Fault:

- On November 14, 2008, the NRC staff was informed by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Company (the license holder or licensee for Diablo Canyon) of this zone of previously unknown seismicity, and the licensee completed an evaluation of the seismic and tsunami effects, determining the site remained operable.
- On April 8, 2009, the NRC staff completed an independent technical evaluation validating the licensee's operability decision as documented in Research Information Letter (RIL) 09-001, "Preliminary Deterministic Analysis of Seismic Hazard at Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant from Newly Identified 'Shoreline Fault'" (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML090330278).
- On September 8-9, 2010, the NRC staff performed public workshops, close to the Diablo Canyon site, for the public to gain a basic knowledge of the seismic hazards and its applications for the safety and operation of commercial nuclear plants, including specific discussions of Diablo Canyon.

- The licensee issued its final analysis report on the Shoreline Fault Zone on January 7, 2011, and the NRC staff conducted a site public meeting in order for PG&E to present the findings of its final Shoreline analysis report to the NRC and the local public on January 19, 2011. A summary of the local public meeting is available at ADAMS Accession No. ML110240590.
- The NRC staff is performing an ongoing independent and confirmatory evaluation of the licensee's Shoreline Fault Zone report which will result in an update to RIL 09-001 by the end of 2011.

In other regulatory activities, the NRC staff held pre-application public meetings with PG&E on December 9, 2010, and January 26 and March 31, 2011 (meeting summaries available at ADAMS Accession Nos. ML103610074, ML100420183, and ML111320637, respectively), in anticipation of a license amendment request submittal to incorporate a methodology for the review of new geotechnical information in the design and licensing basis. The intent of the licensee is to incorporate the deterministic and probabilistic seismic evaluation methods from its Long Term Seismic Program (LTSP) into its license with the amendment request currently scheduled for submittal in May 2011.

In closing, the NRC staff will continue to monitor seismic issues for Diablo Canyon and ensure that the power plants' safety systems remain capable of safely shutting down the plant in case of a seismic event. I want to assure you that the agency continues to make its domestic responsibilities for the licensing and oversight of U.S. licensees its top priority and that U.S. nuclear power plants continue to operate safely. As the NRC conducts the near-term evaluation of the relevance of the recent Japanese events to the U.S. fleet, the agency is continuing to gather the information needed for us to take a longer, more thorough look at the events in Japan and their lessons for the NRC. Based on these efforts, the agency will take all appropriate actions necessary to ensure the continuing public health and safety and protection of the environment.

Thank you for your interest in these matters.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Joseph G. Giitter, Director
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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