

June 11, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman, Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Madam Chairman:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of May 15, 2012, regarding recent problems with the steam generators at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS). You requested a summary of the NRC's plans for establishing whether Southern California Edison's (SCE) replacement of the steam generators required a license amendment, any documents related to the NRC's review of the design change, and documents in the NRC's possession related to SCE's determination that a license amendment was not necessary.

The NRC is currently re-examining the need for a license amendment at SONGS as part of an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) review that is now underway. AITs are used by the NRC to promptly evaluate significant issues that arise at NRC-licensed facilities and to ensure that appropriate actions are taken. We are continuing to review in retrospect whether the licensee's evaluation should have resulted in a determination that the changes to the facility for the SONGS replacement steam generators (RSGs) required NRC review and approval for a design change through a license amendment.

As a part of this effort, we have obtained from the licensee various documents that relate to SCE's determination that a license amendment was not necessary. As requested, copies of those documents are enclosed. Because they contain sensitive licensee information, I ask that you please hold them in confidence, with access limited to Members and Committee staff.

NRC regulations at 10 CFR 50.59 and associated guidance in Regulatory Guide 1.187 include criteria for a licensee to determine when a license amendment is required for proposed changes to a facility. Historically, RSGs have been evaluated against these criteria and no license amendment was required. SCE's evaluation for the SONGS RSGs was consistent with these past practices and supported by all NRC inspections to date. As requested, copies of four publicly available NRC inspection reports that contain the reviews of the SONGS RSGs are enclosed.

The Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA) will inform your staff of the results of our AIT analyses when those actions are completed, as well as alert your office to all public meetings associated with SONGS. If you need additional information, please contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of OCA, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Gregory B. Jaczko

Enclosures:

1. SONGS NRC IIR 05000361/2009004
& 05000362/2009004, & NOV
2. SONGS Unit 2 SG Replacement Project
Inspection Report 05000361/2009007
3. SONGS Unit 2 SG Replacement Project
Inspection Report 05000361/2010008
4. SONGS Unit 3 SG Replacement Project
Inspection Report No. 05000362/2010009
5. NECP 800071702, ASC D0018051
SG Replacement – Unit 2
6. NECP 800071702, SG Replacement
Unit 2, ASC D0018051
7. NECP 800071703, SG
Replacement # Unit 3
8. SG Replacement – Unit 3

cc: Senator James M. Inhofe