

December 28, 2012

The Honorable Sam Abed
Mayor of Escondido
Escondido, CA 92025

Dear Mayor Abed:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter to the Commissioners dated November 5, 2012, expressing concerns about San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS).

SONGS Units 2 and 3 are currently shut down to investigate the causes of excessive steam generator tube wear on the replacement steam generators. On March 15, 2012, the NRC sent an augmented inspection team to the site in response to the January 31, 2012, steam generator tube leak in Unit 3 and the subsequent discovery of significant tube-to-tube wear on both of the Unit 3 steam generators and lesser tube-to-tube wear on one of the two Unit 2 steam generators. For several months, this team of NRC inspectors, with assistance from other NRC experts, closely followed the licensee's actions to evaluate the causes of the excessive tube wear and to develop corrective actions to prevent further tube degradation. On June 18, 2012, NRC staff met with representatives of Southern California Edison, the licensee, in San Juan Capistrano, California, to present the NRC's issues and observations resulting from the inspection. As discussed in that meeting, the NRC understands the steam generator thermal hydraulic conditions that resulted in the tube degradation and that these conditions were not accurately predicted during design of the replacement steam generators. The licensee is evaluating additional actions to prevent additional tube-to-tube degradation due to excessive vibration. On September 28, 2012, the inspection team completed a follow-up inspection to address unresolved items from the March 15, 2012, inspection.

On March 27, 2012, the NRC issued a confirmatory action letter to Southern California Edison, identifying the specific actions the licensee has committed to take prior to returning the units to power operation. On October 3, 2012, Southern California Edison provided its response to the confirmatory action letter for Unit 2, which included both an assessment of the causes of the steam generator tube degradation and a proposed plan for restart of Unit 2. The NRC has a public website dedicated to the oversight of SONGS where both of these documents can be accessed, as well as a summary of the issues and many additional relevant documents. The website can be found at <http://www.nrc.gov/info-finder/reactor/songs/tube-degradation.html>.

The NRC will continue its independent, in-depth inspections and detailed reviews of the issues at SONGS. The NRC will not allow the plant to restart until we are satisfied that the licensee can operate the plant without undue risk to public health and safety. The NRC will take the time needed to determine the appropriate actions to ensure the safety of the public, and will communicate its determinations regarding the restart of SONGS, Units 2 and 3.

The NRC has heard the safety concerns of the citizens in your community and others located near SONGS, and has committed itself to ensuring that the public is informed about the condition of the plant and our work to assure its safety. For example, on October 9, 2012, the NRC held a public meeting in Dana Point, California, to discuss the status of the issues at SONGS and to hear the views of interested local stakeholders. Southern California Edison requested another public meeting to discuss the confirmatory action letter response it submitted for NRC review, which was held on November 30, 2012. In addition, the NRC plans to have future public meetings concerning SONGS. Public meetings are announced on the NRC's website at <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/public-meetings/index.cfm>.

On behalf of the NRC, I want to thank you for your continued involvement in matters related to nuclear safety. You and your constituents' interest and feedback help us to fulfill our public health and safety mission in an open and transparent manner.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Allison M. Macfarlane

cc: Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Dianne Feinstein