



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

September 28, 1992

Docket No. 50-333

Mr. Ralph E. Beedle  
Executive Vice President - Nuclear Generation  
Power Authority of the State of New York  
123 Main Street  
White Plains, New York 10601

Dear Mr. Beedle:

SUBJECT: HARDENED WETWELL VENT CAPABILITY AT THE JAMES A. FITZPATRICK NUCLEAR  
POWER PLANT (TAC NOS. M74968 AND M82364)

As a part of a comprehensive plan for closing severe accident issues, the NRC staff undertook a program to determine if any actions should be taken, on a generic basis, to reduce the vulnerability of BWR Mark I containments to severe accident challenges. At the conclusion of the Mark I Containment Performance Improvement Program, the NRC staff identified a number of plant modifications that substantially enhance the plant's capability to both prevent and mitigate the consequences of severe accidents. One of the modifications recommended was improved hardened wetwell vent capability. After considering the proposed Mark I Containment Performance Program (described in SECY 89-017, January 1989), the Commission directed the staff to pursue Mark I enhancements on a plant-specific basis in order to account for possible unique design differences that may bear on the necessity and nature of specific safety improvements. Accordingly, the Commission concluded that the recommended safety improvements, with one exception, that is, hardened wetwell vent capability, should be evaluated by licensees as part of the Individual Plant Examination (IPE) Program. With regard to the recommended plant improvement dealing with hardened vent capability, the Commission, in recognition of the circumstances and benefits associated with this modification, directed the staff to facilitate installation of a hardened vent under the provisions of 10 CFR 50.59 for licensees, who on their own initiative, elect to incorporate this plant improvement. On September 1, 1989, the staff issued Generic Letter 89-16, "Installation of a Hardened Wetwell Vent," which encouraged licensees to implement a hardened wetwell vent capability under the provisions of 10 CFR 50.59.

By letters dated October 27, 1989, and July 25, 1990, the Power Authority of the State of New York (PASNY) notified the NRC staff that it would defer making a decision on whether to install a hardened wetwell vent until the FitzPatrick Individual Plant Examination (IPE) was completed. In those letters, PASNY provided "plant specific" design information and engineering analyses that justified this approach on the hardened vent issue. The NRC staff reviewed the information provided by PASNY in the stated letters. Additionally, on August 22, 1990, the staff inspected the existing wetwell vent path at the FitzPatrick plant. As a result of the staff's review of PASNY's submittals, the inspection of the FitzPatrick wetwell vent path, and a

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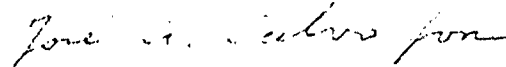
review of the existing venting procedures and training, the NRC, by letter dated January 24, 1991, approved PASNY's approach to defer its decision to fully implement the industry's hardened vent general design criteria until completion of the IPE.

By letter dated December 6, 1991, PASNY provided the NRC with its final position regarding implementation of the hardened vent design criteria along with insights gained from performing the IPE and the status of investigations into accident management strategies associated with severe accidents. In a letter dated August 14, 1992, PASNY provided additional information on the hardened vent capability. PASNY determined that the current design of the FitzPatrick hardened wetwell vent meets many of the Boiling Water Reactor Owners Group (BWROG) design criteria and represents an acceptable deviation from the remainder. Furthermore, PASNY concluded that hardware modifications needed to fully meet the BWROG design criteria are not necessary to ensure that the vent performs its decay heat removal and scrubbing functions and would not produce significant public benefits.

Based on the information provided by PASNY and the results of the NRC inspection of the FitzPatrick hardened wetwell vent path, the NRC staff has determined that the current vent path meets the hardened vent design criteria or their intent. Furthermore, the NRC staff finds that the plant procedures and training are adequate to provide the information and guidance necessary for operators to effectively use the FitzPatrick hardened wetwell vent capability. Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that the existing wetwell vent capability at the FitzPatrick plant is acceptable.

A copy of the staff's evaluation of the plant-specific features, procedures, and training related to the FitzPatrick hardened wetwell vent capability is enclosed. This action completes our review activities associated with GL 89-16 and closes TAC Nos. M74868 and M82364.

Sincerely,



Steven A. Varga, Director  
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:  
Safety Evaluation

cc w/enclosure:  
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