

MAR 18 1977

Docket No. 50-275  
and 50-323

The Honorable Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Mathias:

I am pleased to respond to your note of February 10, 1977, forwarding a note from your constituent Ms. Marian Barbour. Ms. Barbour enclosed the January 27 Jack Anderson column concerning the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant and expressed an opinion that the plant should not be allowed to operate.

The Hosgri fault was discovered in 1971 close to the plant and has been the subject of investigation by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the U. S. Geological Survey and the Commission since 1973 when PG&E applied for an operating license.

Operation of the plant is being held up, at considerable cost, because the earthquake safety questions are not yet resolved. The first unit at this site was essentially completed early last year. It appears that operation will have been held up about 1 1/2 years before a decision on the operating license can be made.

The plant is located 3 1/2 miles from the Hosgri fault on a foundation of competent rock. What we are dealing with here is a question of redesign and modification to withstand more severe ground shaking than was considered in the original design. However, there is no reason to be concerned about ground rupture at the plant site due to an earthquake. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has called for an analysis to determine what changes may be necessary so that the plant can withstand a magnitude 7.5 earthquake on the Hosgri fault recommended by the United States Geological Survey. This is a very severe earthquake design basis.

The plant's owner, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, is performing this engineering analysis. Then the matter must be reviewed in turn by the NRC staff and by the independent Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. In the process, it will have been scrutinized by many competent geologists, seismologists and structural engineers, including independent consultants of national stature. Finally, the matter will be considered by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board at a public hearing.

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The Honorable Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. - 2 -

It is not known, at this time, what the final decision will be.

As you requested, this response is made to you in duplicate and the original correspondence is returned. I trust you will find this information responsive to your request.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Lee V. Gossick

Lee V. Gossick  
Executive Director  
for Operations

Enclosure:

Letter from Ms. Marian Barbour

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bcc: Pacific Gas and Electric  
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The Honorable Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. - 2 -

It is not known, at this time, what the final decision will be. However, the NRC's regulations require that the plant be designed to withstand the most severe earthquake that could be expected to occur at the site. This must be demonstrated before operation of the plant is permitted.

As you requested, this response is made to you in duplicate and the original correspondence is returned. I trust you will find this information responsive to your request.

Sincerely,

Enclosure:  
Letter from Ms. Marian Barbour

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bcc: Pacific Gas and Electric  
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