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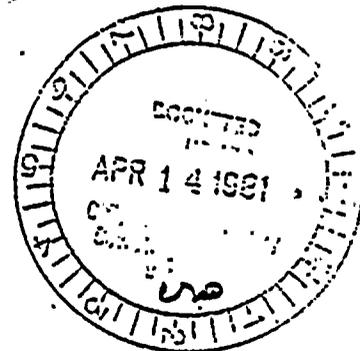
UNITED STATES

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

4/13/81

APR 13 1981



The Honorable Bill Lowery
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Lowery:

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of your constituent, Robert Durham, who is concerned about NRC licensing delays. In particular he mentions the Diablo Canyon units and Three Mile Island Unit 1.

Following the accident at Three Mile Island, the Commission did not issue any further operating licenses for over a year while a thorough review was made of implications of the accident. In the spring of 1980, the Commission approved new requirements for operating licenses based on the lessons learned from Three Mile Island. Since that time several new operating licenses have been issued, the most recent being for Farley Unit 2 in Alabama on March 31, 1981.

The diversion of resources and the rethinking of safety requirements following the TMI accident adversely affected licensing activity at the Commission. As a result, we estimate that in 1981 and 1982 approximately a dozen nuclear plants will be completed from 1 to 12 months before a full power license decision can be made. The Commission is concerned about this situation and is taking a number of steps to correct it. These steps are outlined in the attached testimony given by Chairman Hendrie on April 2 before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development.

With respect to the Diablo Canyon units, an updated Supplemental Safety Evaluation Report for low-power operation was issued by the NRC staff on March 5, 1981. Hearings will commence in May with a licensing decision on low-power operation expected in February 1982 and on full-power license in March 1982. These projected decision dates would mean a thirteen month delay using the applicant's construction completion date and an eleven month delay using the NRC staff's.

Three Mile Island Unit 1 was down for refueling at the time of the accident at TMI-2 in late March 1979. On July 2, 1979, the Commission ordered that the facility remain in cold shutdown until further order of the Commission, stating that "the Commission presently lacks the requisite reasonable assurance that the... Licensee's Three Mile Island Unit No. 1 Facility... can be operated without endangering the health and safety of the public." Further, the Commission stated that public hearings would be conducted to determine whether TMI-1 should be allowed to resume operation and if so, under what conditions.

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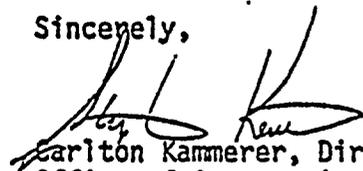


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In a subsequent order issued August 9, the Commission established procedures for the hearing and decision on the issues. The hearings began before a NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on October 15, 1980. The current estimate is that a Board decision will not be made before late 1981. I am enclosing for your further information the most recent Commission order regarding the restart proceeding.

I hope that this information is helpful in responding to your constituent.

Sincerely,


Carlton Kammerer, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs

Enclosure:
As stated

