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APR 27 1979

Docket Nos: 50-275
and 50-323

Mr. P. C. Miller
19401 Shubert
Saratoga, California 95070

Dear Mr. Miller:

I am pleased to respond to your letter dated March 28, 1979, to the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Since it would not be appropriate under current Commission rules for the Chairman to comment on your concern, your letter was referred to me for reply.

You expressed concern over the potential for delays in the issuance of a decision on an operating license for the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plants in order to satisfy anti-nuclear minority groups. Furthermore, you urged that the Commission grant an operating license to the Pacific Gas & Electric Company for Diablo Canyon, Unit 1.

As you may know, the major safety concern during our review of Diablo Canyon was the ability of the plant to safely withstand the effects of a postulated earthquake from the nearby Hosgri fault. The Hosgri fault, which is located approximately 3 1/2 miles from the Diablo Canyon Plants, was discovered in 1971. As a result of this discovery, an intensive study of the effect of the Hosgri fault was undertaken by the Pacific Gas & Electric Company, the U. S. Geological Survey and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The results of this study, indicated that significant modifications were necessary in order that the Diablo Canyon Plants withstand a magnitude 7.5 earthquake at the Hosgri fault. While we believe this to be a very severe design basis earthquake, we find that the required modifications and attendant delays were necessary and in the best interest of the general public. Comprehensive public hearings were conducted over a period of several months by an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board. These hearings were completed on February 15, 1979 and the record was closed early last month. The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board is in the process of preparing its decision regarding the licensing of Diablo Canyon based on the record of these proceedings.

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Mr. P. C. Miller

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The ground motion earthquake that was recorded from the June 12, 1978 earthquake event at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station in Japan was about two-thirds of that level for which the plant was designed, although substantially lower than that for which the Diablo Canyon plant is designed. Since domestic nuclear power plants are designed very similarly to these Japanese plants, this event gives us confidence that American plants should also be capable of withstanding similar events. We will continue to follow the reports dealing with the effect of the June 12, 1978 earthquake on the Fukushima Station and will consider this information with respect to staff criteria for domestic nuclear plant designs.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:
Roger S. Boyd

Roger S. Boyd, Director
Division of Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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