



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

June 25, 1990

Docket Nos. 50-220
50-410

Mr. Jack M. Endries
President
Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation
300 Erie Boulevard West
Syracuse, New York 13202

Dear Mr. Endries:

On June 12 and 13, 1990, NRC senior managers met to review the performance of nuclear power plants licensed to operate by the NRC. This meeting is conducted semiannually to focus NRC resources on those plants and related issues of greatest safety significance. At this meeting, Nine Mile Point Units 1 and 2 were categorized as continuing to require close monitoring. Plants in this category have been identified as having weaknesses that warrant increased NRC attention from both Headquarters and the Regional Office until the licensee demonstrates a period of improved performance.

A summary of the discussions held relating to Nine Mile Point Units 1 and 2 is provided below:

Since the January 1990 Senior Management Meeting, continued progress has been made in implementing corrective actions which address the underlying root causes of prior poor performance. Progress in making Unit 1 ready for restart has been slow as a result of a conservative approach to ensuring system readiness and underestimating the time needed to implement needed modifications, repairs and tests. As a result of the July 1989 Unit 2 Requalification Examination failures, several programmatic changes and extensive retraining have been implemented. A recent NRC re-evaluation of the requalification program demonstrated the effectiveness of these corrective actions. The licensee efforts with respect to decontamination of the old radwaste building basement are proceeding. The approach is cautious, technically sound and well managed.

The licensee has delayed the Unit 2 refueling outage until at least August 1990 in order to better plan the outage and minimize overlap with the Unit 1 startup, which is currently estimated to begin in early July 1990. A recent Restart Assessment Team Inspection determined that the licensee had made substantial progress in resolving the five identified underlying root causes of past performance deficiencies. Further, particular progress was noted in improving safety attitude, teamwork, communications, coordination, cooperation, procedure quality, procedural

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compliance, control of activities, management oversight, problem identification, and self assessment. The team concluded that the current level of performance supports permitting restart. The NRC will continue to closely monitor and confirm the readiness of Unit 1 for restart.

However, recent difficulties encountered during testing of the Feedwater /High Pressure Coolant Injection system, to resolve residual design concerns, have raised questions regarding procedure adequacy, control of systems, and attention to detail. These problems are not characteristic of recent performance and additional licensee effort is necessary to understand and resolve root causes to prevent recurrence.

The NRC remains sensitive to the potential adverse impact of future management changes. The licensee has recently announced selection of two executives with nuclear experience to replace the Executive Vice President Nuclear and the General Superintendent Nuclear Generation. The selected individuals will report to the site in the near future with a final turnover scheduled for November 1990. The NRC will closely monitor site activities to assess the effectiveness of the transition activities in sustaining the currently observed improving trends.

An NRC Commission meeting, open to the public, has been scheduled for June 27, 1990, to review the results of the latest meeting of NRC managers. Mr. Thomas T. Martin, the Region I Administrator, has discussed the basis for our conclusions with regard to Nine Mile Point Units 1 and 2 with members of your staff.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,
Original Signed By:
James M. Taylor
James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

cc: See next page

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