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ACCESSION NBR: 9708130221 DOC. DATE: 97/08/04 NOTARIZED: NO DOCKET #
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SUBJECT: Informs of commitment to resolve issues presented in NRC Bulletin 96-003, "Potential Plugging of Emergency Core Cooling Suction Strainers by Debris in BWRs." Installation of new suction strainers at earliest opportunity.

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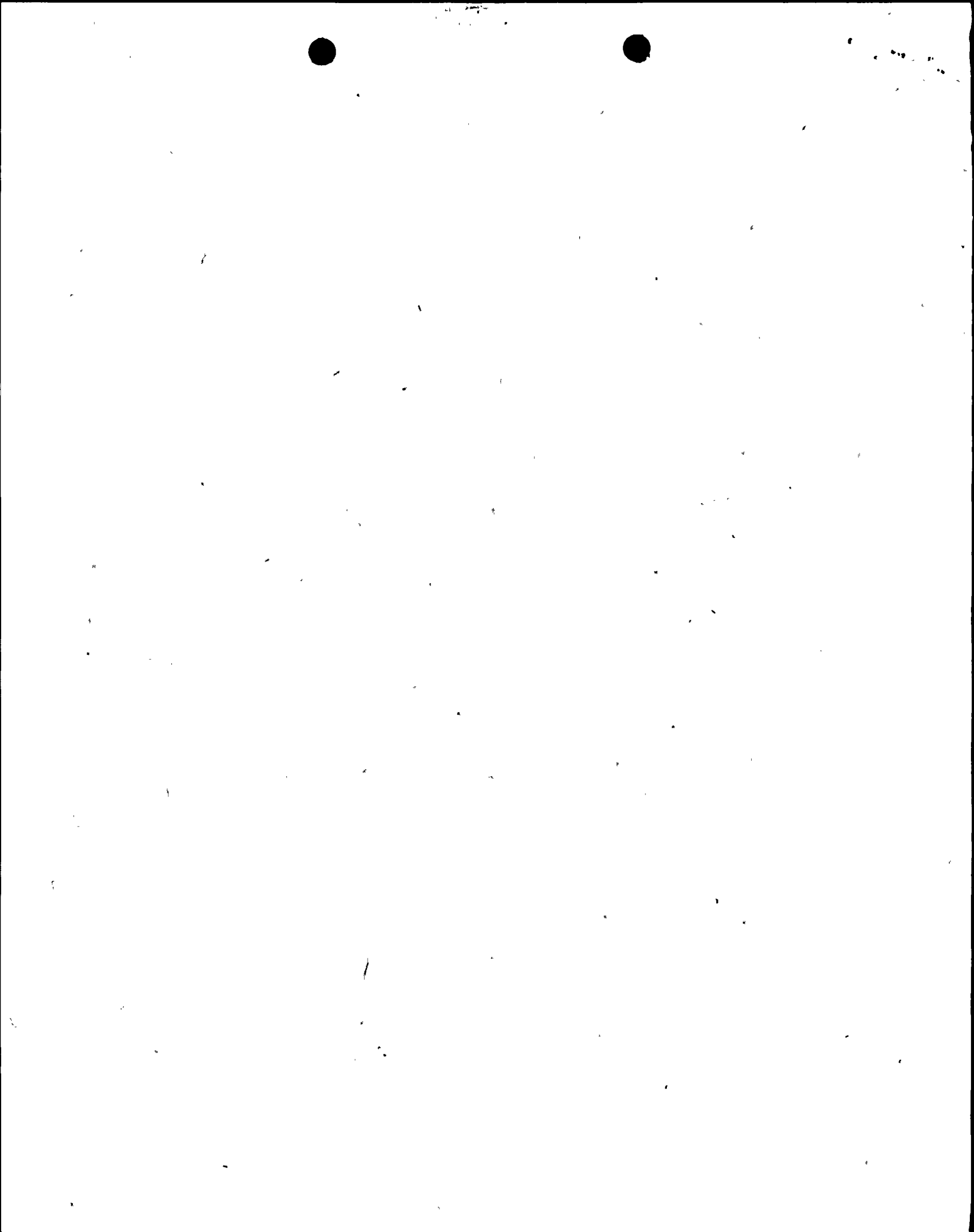
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JOHN T. CONWAY
Vice President
Nuclear Engineering

August 4, 1997
NMP1L 1239

U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Attn: Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555

RE: Nine Mile Point Unit 1
Docket No. 50-220
DPR-63

Subject: *NRC Bulletin 96-03, "Potential Plugging Of Emergency Core Cooling Suction Strainers By Debris In Boiling-Water Reactors"*

Gentlemen:

By letter dated May 6, 1996, the Commission issued NRC Bulletin 96-03, "Potential Plugging of Emergency Core Cooling Suction Strainers by Debris in Boiling-Water Reactors." Bulletin 96-03 was issued to have licensees implement appropriate procedural measures and plant modifications to minimize the potential for clogging of emergency core cooling system (ECCS) suppression pool suction strainers by debris generated during a loss-of-coolant accident (LOCA). Also, the Bulletin required that licensees report to the Commission within 180 days as to whether, and to what extent, the requested actions would be taken and to notify the Commission when actions associated with this Bulletin were complete. All licensees were requested to implement these actions by the end of the first refueling outage starting after January 1, 1997.

Subsequent to the issuance of Bulletin 96-03, the Staff requested that each licensee with plants having refueling outages during the Spring of 1997 and that would be unable to meet the schedular requirements of the Bulletin, submit an initial response as soon as possible. This initial response would detail the actions to be taken, the mitigative strategies to be used, and a schedule for final implementation.

Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation's (NMPC) letter dated October 4, 1996, provided the NRC notification that NMPC could not implement certain of the requested actions identified in Bulletin 96-03 by the end of our spring 1997 Refueling Outage (REFOUT97) (i.e., our first refueling outage starting after January 1, 1997). This letter provided the bases for not being able to implement a final resolution by REFOUT97 and the justification for deferring

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implementation of the requested actions from the spring of 1997 (REFOUT97) until the spring of 1999 (REFOUT99). The information provided included a discussion of Nine Mile Point Unit 1 (NMP1) specific design features, current mitigative strategies and the interim compensatory actions that would be taken during REFOUT97.

During REFOUT97 inspections of the NMP1 core shroud were performed. As detailed in our April 8, 1997 letter, because of cracking found during these inspections, NMP1 is currently limited to 10,600 hours at hot operation (about 14 1/2 months) before it must shutdown to perform additional core shroud inspections. Also discussed in that letter were NMPC's plans to conduct additional analyses in the present operating cycle to justify an extension to this reinspection interval.

The NRC's letter of June 19, 1997, indicated that they had reviewed our response to Bulletin 96-03, including the actions that were completed during REFOUT97, and concluded that these actions provide reasonable assurance of the continued safe operation of NMP1 until the installation of new, high capacity strainers. However, the NRC requested that NMPC install the high capacity passive suction strainers while shutdown for the above mentioned core shroud inspection outage, but no later than December 31, 1998 (versus REFOUT99 as proposed by NMPC), and to notify the NRC staff in writing within 45 days if this was not acceptable. The purpose of this letter is to notify you that the requirement to install new ECCS suction strainers prior to 12/31/98 may not be acceptable to NMPC.

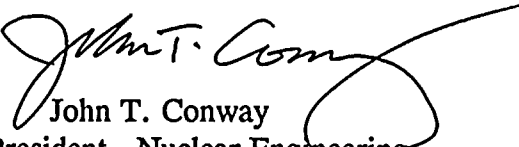
NMPC believes that the information provided in our letter of October 4, 1996, provides technical justification for allowing NMP1 to continue to operate until the spring of 1999 (REFOUT99) without installing new suction strainers. Committing to an implementation date prior to REFOUT99 at this time could place an unnecessary economic hardship on NMPC due to the following uncertainties:

1. The core shroud analysis being performed to extend the reinspection interval is not complete. If this analysis justifies an extension of the shroud inspections to REFOUT99, no mid-cycle shroud inspection outage would be required. Accordingly, installation of the new strainers prior to REFOUT99 would require a forced outage, and result in unnecessary economic hardship.
2. If the core shroud analysis does not justify an extension of the shroud inspections to REFOUT99 (i.e., a shroud inspection outage is required prior to REFOUT99), NMPC must determine if the strainers can be installed within the time restraints of the shroud inspection outage. The schedule duration of the inspection outage has not been finalized. Additionally, because the strainer design is not complete, the outage length required to install the strainers is presently unknown.

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As outlined in previous submittals to the NRC, NMPC is committed to resolving the issues presented in Bulletin 96-03 and intends to install new suction strainers at the earliest possible opportunity which does not unduly penalize NMPC. NMPC will provide you with additional details concerning our strainer installation schedule by November 30, 1997.

Very truly yours,


John T. Conway
Vice President - Nuclear Engineering

JTC/JMT/cmck

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