



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

January 29, 1996

Mr. James J. O'Connor
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth Edison Company
P.O. Box 767
Chicago, IL 60690

Dear Mr. O'Connor:

On January 17-18, 1996, NRC senior managers met to evaluate the nuclear safety performance of operating reactors, fuel facilities and other materials licensees. The NRC conducts this meeting semiannually to determine if the safety performance of various licensees exhibits sufficient weaknesses to warrant increased NRC attention or if it is trending adversely and requires steps to be taken to communicate concerns to the utility's president or board of directors. At the January 1996 Senior Management Meeting (SMM), the Dresden Nuclear Power Station was discussed.

The Dresden Station was placed on the NRC watch list for the second time in January 1992 and remains a Category 2 plant. Plants in this category have been identified as having weaknesses that warrant increased NRC attention until the licensee demonstrates a period of improved performance. A summary of NRC discussions related to Dresden follows:

During the June 1995 SMM, NRC noted that ComEd had lost its momentum in improvement efforts at Dresden. Over the past six months, ComEd has taken steps to regain this momentum. Following a significant event involving violation of technical specification limits at the beginning of 1995, station management refocused attention on operations standards and accountability. As a consequence, marked improvement has been observed in control room activities. While Unit 3 was hampered with equipment problems coming out of an extended forced outage, each of three startup evolutions on the Unit was conducted in a deliberate, error free manner. Priority was given to resolving operator work-arounds and control room deficiencies with positive results. Overall, a more conservative approach to decision making has been observed at the station.

Units 2 and 3 were both shutdown for most of the past six months. Unit 2 has been in an extended refueling outage and Unit 3 was shut down to repair a failed turbine generator. Steps were taken to resolve a number of longstanding equipment problems during these outages. However, considerable work remains to be done with respect to material condition. The backlog of equipment deficiencies remains high while problems with work planning and coordination have persisted. Station management acted to improve work control and planning, but significant results have yet to be observed. Weaknesses in worker skill levels continue to hamper progress in this area.

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Mr. James J. O'Connor

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The number of radiological protection and maintenance related personnel errors also continued to be high, particularly during the dual unit outage, indicating efforts to communicate management standards and expectations have not been fully effective. Engineering support to the station improved through increased staffing and involvement in plant activities but efforts to better identify equipment problems through plant walkdowns and system reviews need to continue.

Continued significant management attention is needed to assure improvement efforts are sustained and effective at Dresden. This is particularly important in light of the long time that Dresden has been a Category 2 plant and its history of cyclic performance. While performance improvements have again been observed in some areas, effectiveness of recent management changes and improvement efforts will only become clear as the Unit 2 outage is completed, the Unit is restarted and operated along with Unit 3 for a period of time.

Mr. Hubert J. Miller, the Region III Administrator, has discussed the bases for our conclusions with members of your staff.

An NRC Commission meeting, open to the public, has been scheduled to be held in the Commissioners' Conference Room in Rockville, Maryland, on January 31, 1996, at 10:00 a.m., to review the results of the latest meeting of NRC senior managers.

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

Sincerely,

Original signed by
James M. Taylor

James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

Docket Nos. 50-237, 50-249

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J. J. O'Connor
Commonwealth Edison Company

Dresden Nuclear Power Station
Unit Nos. 2 and 3

cc:

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