

50-237
50-249



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

June 21, 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 June 4-5, 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 June 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:

Unit 2 restarted from an extended refueling outage in late April. Unit 3 has operated at power for most of the past six months. Both Units were recently shutdown to address equipment failures in the main feedwater system.

Management of control room activities continued to be good and a conservative approach to decision making and plant operations has generally been taken. Major plant evolutions have been performed in a deliberate, well-controlled manner. Overall, there has been some progress in reducing the number of personnel errors at the station, but problems with plant equipment lineups and your "out-of-service" program reflect some continuing weaknesses in the execution of field activities. Some of these problems should have been identified during Unit 2 pre-startup readiness reviews indicating continued effort is needed to effectively communicate management standards and expectations to station personnel.

Continued, slow improvement in plant material condition has been observed. Efforts to address operator workarounds have been positive, for example. Strong steps were taken to test systems before restart of Unit 2. However, the potential impact of equipment problem backlogs, which remain large, was revealed by the recent Unit 3 scram and safety system actuation caused by failure of a feedwater control valve. Steps taken to improve work control processes and worker skill levels have begun to show some results but long term trends are not yet clear. System engineers.

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are more consistently identifying and following up on discrepant conditions. However, engineering backlogs are large. Also, some fundamental weaknesses in design control were reflected by a failure to resolve known problems with reactor building structural steel which did not meet seismic design criteria contained in the Dresden Licensing basis.

Continued, significant management attention is needed to assure improvement efforts are sustained and effective at Dresden. We will continue to closely monitor station performance to determine if lasting change is being made. This includes observing performance as Units 2 and 3 are operated together for a period of time and the Unit 3 outage is conducted in the fall of this year. In addition to ongoing Region III inspection and oversight activities, we plan to conduct an extensive team inspection to independently assess progress in correcting performance problems and sample compliance with licensing and design basis requirements. We also plan to monitor closely efforts you are making to address performance issues at your other nuclear facilities. It is vital that activities at Dresden not detract from these other efforts.

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 June 25, 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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James J. O'Connor
Commonwealth Edison Company

Dresden Nuclear Power Station
Unit Nos. 2 and 3

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