

June 2, 1984

Mr. Nunzio Palladino  
Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Palladino:

Enclosed is copy of an article from today's Palm Beach Post. It cites criticisms leveled at FP&L in connection with the necessity to remove the thermal heat shield from St. Lucie nuclear plant #L.

In addition to the concerns Ms. Blackman expresses, I am concerned over the reserve capacity of spent fuel pools at all of Florida's nuclear plants. I understand that when these plants were designed they were always to have enough room to contain the fuel rods in case a loss of coolant water in the operating plant should necessitate emergency removal of the rods for cooling in the pool. But; in the meantime, haven't plants been required to store the spent fuel on site that was originally planned to be sent off site for reprocessing? Are larger pools now being required and do our Florida pools now have the capacity to handle such an emergency. If they do not, what is "plan B?"

Yours truly,

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# Error Costly At Reactor

By Cathy Sims

HUTCHINSON ISLAND — An anti-nuclear power group will hold a vigil today to protest what it calls a dangerous \$250-million mistake at Florida Power & Light Co.'s St. Lucie I nuclear power plant.

Members of the Treasure Coast Alliance for Peace will meet at 10 a.m. for the hourlong vigil in front of the plant on South Hutchinson Island. They want to call attention to the recent dismantling of a thermal shield built to protect the plant building from exposure to the radioactive materials inside, group spokesman Lisa Blackman said yesterday.

They want to warn area residents that the plant may be dangerous without that shield, and to ask why FPL customers, not stockholders, are paying for the repair. "It should be public knowledge that we have a nuke that has an unsolved problem," she said. "It won't be a problem for several decades, because the breakdown (of the building) is gradual, but I don't think I care to trust FPL to shut down the plant in 40 years because it becomes a problem."

FPL officials made several serious mistakes with the shield, Ms. Blackman said. First, they left it in the design for the plant after their contractors, Combustion Engineering, warned them in a 1969 memo that it might crack, which Ms. Blackman says she has copied.

FPL did not want to deal with the paper work and lost time of changing its design and getting approval from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, she said. She also said FPL has not replaced the faulty shield with anything that protects the building from radiation.

Dave Woolverton, FPL director of communications, said the company did want to avoid the cost of delays and changes in design, but didn't risk anyone's safety by leaving the shield in place. He said he isn't aware of a memo from Combustion Engineering.

"There may have been people who had problems with the shield, and we may have been notified that some other utility had a problem," he said. "But there is not a problem because of the lack of a thermal shield. The NRC has approved us building a twin reactor without a thermal shield."

They've reassessed a lot of the technology since then. When the decision was made to keep the shield, it became a decision to retain what was then considered an optional thing.

Ms. Blackman said FPL has been billing its customers an extra \$200 million during the past 13 months for fuel to replace the electricity lost while the plant was out of operation and \$30 million for the repairs.

"Why don't they get the stockholders to pay?" she said. "To me, it doesn't make the industry responsive when they don't have to pay for their mistakes."

Ratepayers, not stockholders, normally pay a plant's operating expenses and the repairs are an operating expense, Woolverton said. FPL has insurance which is paying the lion's share of the repair and replacement fuel costs, he said.

FPL belongs to two groups of utilities with nuclear power plants which have their own insurance systems. One system is covering \$45 million of the roughly \$50 million for removing the thermal shield. The other system has paid \$2.5 million a week, most of the cost of replacement fuel to provide the electricity the plant should have been generating, Woolverton said.

He denied Blackman's claim that keeping the shield in the original plans was a bad business decision that has been an unfair cost to ratepayers.

