

Docket File

50-272

see  
Reports



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

April 15, 1997

Mr. John H. Trout  
410 Edgewater Road  
Pasadena, MD 21122

Dear Mr. Trout:

Your letter of March 12, 1997, to Chairman Jackson has been referred to me for response. As you may know, Salem Nuclear Generating Station, Units 1 and 2, were shut down in May and June 1995 respectively, due to long-standing plant performance issues. The NRC issued a confirmatory action letter to the Salem licensee on June 9, 1995, delineating licensee commitments that must be satisfied before restart of either Salem unit. Through its inspection program, the NRC will verify that the licensee's commitments are satisfied before restart will be authorized.

As part of its inspection and review process to determine if the Salem units will be authorized to restart, the NRC staff held a public meeting near the Salem site on March 4, 1997. This meeting included a presentation by the NRC staff regarding a number of regulatory issues associated with Salem. A copy of the transcript from the March 4, 1997, meeting is enclosed. Another public meeting to provide status of restart activities and to solicit public concerns related to the Salem plant will be scheduled before possible restart of Salem Unit 2 and prior to the start of the 2-week onsite NRC Restart Assessment Team Inspection, which is currently scheduled to begin by mid-May.

Your letter to Chairman Jackson stated that local people who attended recent hearings on the restart of Salem characterize the attitude of the NRC staff as one of taking sides with the licensee. We appreciate you sharing this perception with us. The NRC staff recognizes the importance of maintaining its independence from licensees and realizes that its credibility can be adversely affected by real or perceived inappropriate actions. The NRC's expectations are that nothing but the highest possible standards of ethical performance and professionalism should influence regulation.

The NRC staff's goals at the March 4, 1997, public meeting were to provide the public with the status of Salem's potential restart activities focusing on past NRC inspection results, provide planned future NRC inspection initiatives, and accept comments from the public regarding the potential restart of the Salem units. With the above expectations in mind, we believe these goals were appropriately fulfilled. However, your letter served as an important reminder of both the Commission's and the public's expectations regarding the performance of the NRC staff. Also, your letter and a copy of the meeting transcript have been referred to the NRC Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for whatever actions it deems appropriate. The NRC OIG provides the Commission with an independent review and appraisal of NRC programs and operations to ensure their effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity.

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The potential restart of plants such as the Salem units is governed by an established NRC review process which requires continued communications between the NRC staff and the Commission prior to any restart. This process ensures that the Commission will remain informed in a timely manner of staff determinations with respect to restart of the Salem units.

Thank you for your interest in the Salem units.

Sincerely,

/s/

John F. Stolz, Director  
Project Directorate I-2  
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: Transcript of  
March 4, 1997, meeting

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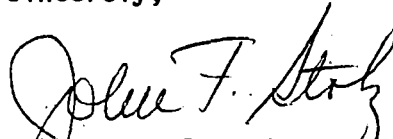
J. Trout

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John F. Stolz, Director  
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