

July 16, 2018

Bart Ziegler
Samuel Lawrence Foundation
PO Box F
Del Mar, CA 92014

Dear Dr. Ziegler,

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter dated May 24, 2018, in which you expressed concern about the discovery of a loose bolt during the mandatory pre-loading inspection of a Holtec multipurpose canister. Specifically, your letter identifies concerns about the future ability to transport spent nuclear fuel to a consolidated interim storage facility or a permanent repository.

Southern California Edison (SCE) officials first identified the broken shim standoff bolt in mid-February 2018, when they were conducting a pre-loading inspection of canisters at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS), which specifically looks for "foreign material" such as loose parts. They found a small piece of stainless steel approximately 4-inches long and 7/16-inch in diameter inside the bottom of one of the canisters. That canister was shipped back to Holtec, which identified the piece of stainless steel as one of the "shim standoffs" that are attached to the bottom of the aluminum shims located around the periphery of the canister. Holtec inspected other canisters at its facility and found another with a broken standoff bolt. On March 6, SCE halted the loading of spent fuel into the Holtec canisters and informed the NRC of the issue it found.

There are four canisters with the newer shim standoff design at SONGS that had been loaded with spent fuel. All four of these canisters were subject to a foreign materials inspection before loading operations and no foreign objects were identified. Additionally, the individuals that performed the loading operations observed the height and locations of the fuel basket and shims prior to and during loading operations and did not observe any indications of a failure that would have been evident by a shim being lower or cocked in the MPC. The licensee has performed an operability determination for all four loaded MPCs and there has been no indication of an issue affecting the safe storage of these four MPCs. The NRC staff has been performing its oversight functions and has been following up with SONGS and Holtec, including an inspection of Holtec performed in May 2018 on this issue. Based on the information reviewed to date and the NRC's knowledge of the cask design, the NRC has determined that the previously loaded casks do not present a threat to public health and safety.

With respect to the "continued loading of additional canisters into the ISFSI," the licensee has resumed loading using canisters with original monolithic shim design, which do not employ standoffs.

With regard to transportability of the four canisters with standoffs, the NRC requires that the licensee be in compliance with all the conditions in the NRC-issued Certificate of Compliance (CoC) for the transport package within which the canister is transported. If any deviations exist in the conditions of components that are important to safety, the CoC holder must submit an amendment for review and obtain NRC's approval prior to the transport of the package.

I want to thank you for sharing your concerns in this matter.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Michael C. Layton, Director
Division of Spent Fuel Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

SUBJECT: LTR-18-0232: BART ZIEGLER, CO-FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, THE SAMUEL LAWRENCE FOUNDATION, LETTER RE: CONCERN ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF A LOOSE BOLT DURING THE MANDATORY PRE-LOADING INSPECTION OF A HOLTEC MULTIPURPOSE CANISTER ON FEBRUARY 20, 2018, DOCUMENT DATE: July 16, 2018

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