



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

JUN 29 1979

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The Honorable Robert L. Livingston
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Livingston:

This is in reply to your mailgram of May 29, 1979 concerning delays in processing and issuance of operating licenses for the Waterford 3 and Grand Gulf nuclear power plants.

The accident at Three Mile Island No. 2 on March 28 is diverting significant managerial and technical resources of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) from its previous work. It is clear that certain activities related to that accident require higher priority.

As a result of the realignment of resources and priorities, the expected accomplishments on casework related to the issuance of construction permits (CPs) and operating licenses (OLs) will be severely limited. Within the casework category, priority of reviews will be: (1) near-term OLs, (2) completion of CPs in the hearing stage, (3) other OLs where completion of construction is anticipated by January 1981, and (4) CPs and OLs having special review considerations (i.e., Baily and Midland).

The date estimated by NRC staff (as distinguished from the applicant) for completion of construction is September 1981 for Waterford No. 3 and March 1981 for Grand Gulf No. 1. (The date for Grand Gulf No. 2 is several years later.) Since these cases do not qualify under any of the above four priorities, OL reviews are to be suspended until January 1980, which corresponds to a delay of starting such reviews by 6 months for Waterford No. 3 and 12 months for Grand Gulf Nos. 1 and 2. This does not necessarily mean that the issuance of OLs for these units will be delayed, since the OL review will still start well before the date estimated by NRR staff for completion of construction, 21 months before in the case of Waterford No. 3 and 14 months before in the case of Grand Gulf No. 1. Further, on the basis of past experience, these estimated dates for completion of construction may slip.

We are mindful of the economic hardships that can occur as a result of delays in the operation of electric power plants and are working as hard as we can to avoid any unnecessary delays while giving priority to our responsibilities to ensure the continued protection of the health and safety of the public at all nuclear power plants.

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The Honorable Robert L. Livingston

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Both Congress and the Commission are pursuing ways to provide additional resources to the office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation so that these and other suspended reviews will be restarted as promptly as possible.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Lee V. Gossick

Lee V. Gossick
Executive Director for Operations