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Docket No. 50-201

Bcc: D. Orth, SRP, MShupe, ROO
BClausser

Dr. Marvin Resnikoff, Chair
Energy Task Force, Niagara Group
Box 64, Station G
Buffalo, New York 14203

Dear Dr. Resnikoff:

Thank you for your letter of December 20, 1978 expressing interest in the defect in the 8D-2 waste tank pan at West Valley, New York. By now you should have received a copy of my trip report dated January 23, 1978. Hopefully, this trip report provides you with not only the background information and correspondence that led to discovery of this defect, but also with the status of the ongoing investigation.

You have requested a copy of the Inspection Report. As you probably know, Section 2.790 of the NRC's Rules of Practice, Part 2, Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, requires that the Inspection Report be first transmitted to the licensee for review of proprietary or potential proprietary information. If the licensee finds information in the Inspection Report that is considered to be proprietary, then the licensee must make written application to the NRC's regional office of Inspection and Enforcement to withhold such information from public disclosure. If no such written application is made within the twenty (20) day period, then the Inspection Report is transmitted to the NRC licensing staff as well as the Public Document Room and Local Public Document Rooms. As of the date of this letter, the Inspection Report has been prepared and transmitted to the licensee, but is in the 20-day period that allows for the review of potential proprietary information. When that 20-day period is over and/or the review is completed, the Inspection Report will be placed in the Local Public Document Rooms and will be available for your examination.

I appreciate your informing us of the change in your address. We have modified the distribution list accordingly so you can receive appropriate documents more directly. Please be assured that there is no need to again add the Springville and Buffalo Local Public Document Rooms (LPDR's) to the distribution list. These Local Public Document Rooms, as well as the main NRC Public Document Room in downtown Washington, receive copies of all NFS case-related correspondence and documents through an NRC internal distribution system. Thus, the LPDR's would not appear on the external distribution list.

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As I am sure you can understand, having now had the opportunity to examine my trip report, the choice of the word "defect" is not unfortunate. Rather, the choice of the word "defect" is appropriate. The possibility exists that the defect has been, in fact, present in the pan for some time and perhaps, could have been present since construction.

I am interested, however, in your statement that implies some knowledge of the testing of the pan at the time of construction. I would appreciate your contacting me and elaborating on exactly what type of post construction testing you know was conducted. Needless to say, such knowledge of testing would be most helpful if it is properly documented.

In your letter to me you offered a theory that the test itself caused a hole "by pouring ice cold water into a 190 pan." In your letter you did not mention a specific mechanism of such failure. I have assumed that you are referring to the failure mechanisms of thermal shock or brittle fracture. It is the staff's understanding that in conducting the test, NFS did not pour "ice cold water" into the 8D-2 pan. Rather, they deposited plant service water at a temperature of approximately 45° or 50° F through a calibrated water meter with an approximate flow rate of 20 gallons per minute. Also, the pan temperature could not be 190° F since the waste temperature is 185° F. The pan is separated from the waste tank by a layer of pea gravel and 12 inches of insulation perlite blocks. Therefore, the pan temperature is less than 185° F. If you are referring that the test could have produced brittle fracture or thermal shock, then such a failure mechanism would have to have been caused by a preexisting defect in the pan.

I do appreciate your interest and concern in this matter, and I appreciate your offer of the theory of the cause of the defect. As you can see, other possible causes are under consideration; and as information in this investigation continues to be developed, this

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additional information will be made available to you and other members of the public for review and comment as you desire.

If I can be of any further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Haughney

Charles J. Haughney
Fuel Reprocessing and Recycle Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle and
Material Safety

*S. Treby (ELD)
comments incorporated and
concurrent obtained
per Teleconf 1/24/79.*

SEE PREVIOUS YELLOW FOR CONCURRENCE

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