



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

JAN 11 1980

Docket No. 50-344

The Honorable Bob Packwood
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Packwood:

This responds to your letter of December 21, 1979, addressed to Chairman Ahearne, in which you express the need for an expeditious decision on whether the Trojan Nuclear Plant in Oregon, shut down because of certain seismic design problems, should be permitted to resume power operation. Because the question of the adequacy of proposed modifications to correct specific seismic design deficiencies at the Trojan facility is pending before an NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board and its rulings and decisions may be subject to review by the Commissioners, including Chairman Ahearne, it was considered inappropriate for him to respond to your letter. Accordingly, your letter was referred to me for response.

In your letter you indicate that, because of the uncertain energy situation in the Pacific Northwest, a decision on whether or not Trojan will be permitted to operate is needed as soon as possible for energy planning purposes. In this regard, a hearing was held in Portland, Oregon on December 28 and 29, 1979 by an NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board which considered the question as to whether Trojan should be permitted to operate. Based on the record made at that hearing, the Licensing Board rescinded a prior order of November 30, 1979 prohibiting plant operation in an order from the bench issued on December 29, 1979.

A brief description of the background of seismic design problems at Trojan will serve to describe the NRC actions which have been, and are being, taken to resolve the identified seismic problems and assure plant safety. In April, 1978, certain deficiencies in the seismic design of the Control Building at the Trojan facility were discovered and reported to the NRC by the licensee, Portland General Electric Company. Extensive analyses and evaluations of the earthquake-resisting capability of the structure were performed by the licensee and the NRC Staff and, after hearings held in October, November and December of 1978, an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board determined that the facility was safe to operate for an interim period until modifications could be implemented to correct the design deficiencies. On December 22, 1978, the NRC authorized resumption of operation of the facility pending approval of the proposed modifications after additional hearings before the Licensing Board. Those hearings are scheduled to commence on April 1, 1980.

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On October 12, 1979, the Trojan facility was shut down because of steam generator tube leakage. Shortly after that shutdown, an additional problem was discovered with regard to the ability of concrete block walls to withstand earthquake-induced forces from piping attached to those walls. On October 22, 1979 and December 20, 1979, the NRC's Office of Inspection and Enforcement issued immediate action letters to the Trojan licensee documenting the licensee's agreement to remain shut down until the concrete block wall problem was resolved to the satisfaction of the NRC Staff.

Although the concrete block wall problem discovered in October, 1979 was independent of the Control Building design deficiencies, the Licensing Board in the Control Building proceeding expressed a concern over the safety of interim operation and over the fact that the proposed modifications to correct the Control Building design deficiencies had not yet been adjudicated. Accordingly, on November 30, 1979, the Licensing Board ordered that the facility remain in the shutdown condition pending further Board order. As previously mentioned, a hearing at which the Licensing Board's concerns were addressed was held on December 28 and 29, 1979, and, based on the record made at that hearing, the Licensing Board rescinded its November 30, 1979 order prohibiting resumption of operation in an order issued on December 29, 1979.

Following the hearing on December 29, protracted meetings between NRC Staff structural analysts, an engineer from the Oregon Department of Energy and the licensee's technical personnel and consultants were held on December 29, 30 and 31, 1979. Based on the NRC Staff's detailed evaluation of information and analyses on the concrete block wall problem presented previously and at these meetings, the Staff determined that the corrective actions implemented by the licensee were adequate from a safety standpoint, that the concrete block wall problems were satisfactorily resolved, and that there was no basis for requiring the plant to remain shutdown. Accordingly, by letter dated December 31, 1979, the NRC's Office of Inspection and Enforcement removed the restrictions on plant operation as of that date. The Trojan facility returned to power operation shortly thereafter.

Although, of necessity, the sole concern of both the Licensing Board and the NRC Staff with regard to the resumption of operation at Trojan was with the safety of operation, both the Board and the Staff were cognizant of the need to reach decisions on operation as expeditiously as possible consistent with sound decisions. These decisions have now been made.

Thank you for the interest and concerns expressed in your letter of December 21, 1979. I trust that this has been responsive to those concerns.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY R. G. SMITH

Lee V. Gossick
Executive Director for Operations

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

December 21, 1979

Mr. John Ahearne
Chairman,
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Ahearne:

Recently Oregon's Governor Victor Atiyeh wrote you concerning the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board's December 28 hearing on a decision to resume interim operations of the Trojan Nuclear Power Plant. It is the concern of the State that a decision be made as soon as possible. As you know, a major part of Oregon's electricity is provided by hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River. Anticipated water shortages could result in significant reductions in the availability of power. It is important to know as soon as possible whether or not Trojan will be contributing to the grid. This is so plans can be made for supplemental power generation, load shifting, and possibly curtailments of use.

I must stress that I do not wish to influence the outcome of this decision. I have not made a judgement whether or not the safety problem at Trojan has been resolved. I only wish to reaffirm the request of the Governor that the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board act expeditiously on the interim operation decision.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially,


BOB PACKWOOD

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