

Docket Nos. 50-269 ✓  
50-270  
and 50-287

DEC 31 1974

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Honorable Strom Thurmond  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Thurmond:

This is in response to your request for information in order to reply to Ms. Angela Stiepel who expressed concern with nuclear reactors and their effects on the environment and the health of Pickens County residents.

The Atomic Energy Commission, in its review of applications for licenses to construct and operate nuclear power plants, is required by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, to consider those measures necessary for protection of the health and safety of the public. To carry out this responsibility, the Regulatory staff of the AEC conducts a detailed review of all nuclear plant applications to assure that they can be built and operated at the proposed locations without undue risk to the health and safety of the public. This includes assuring that all structures, systems and components important to safety will be designed and constructed to withstand the effects of various postulated environmental phenomena. Additionally, to provide reasonable assurance that facilities can be operated without undue risk to the health and safety of the public, the AEC has established minimum requirements for the principal design criteria for water-cooled nuclear power plants. As with everything else, there is always some risk, no matter how small, in all human activities. The AEC Regulatory process is designed to assure that the most advanced procedures of science and technology are used to protect the public and thereby minimize risk.

Furthermore, under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the AEC is required to perform an independent assessment of the potential environmental impact of proposed nuclear power plants and balance the benefits derived against possible risk to the environment. The staff findings on each case are set forth in a Draft Environmental Statement which is circulated with a request for comments to Federal agencies, state and local agencies and officials, the applicant, and other interested persons. A Final Environmental Statement is then prepared, taking into consideration the comments received.

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The law requires that a public hearing be held before a construction permit may be issued for a nuclear power plant. The hearing is conducted by a three-member Atomic Safety and Licensing Board appointed from the AEC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel. The board is composed of one lawyer who acts as chairman for the proceeding and two other technically qualified persons. The hearings may be a combined safety and environmental hearing or in the case of a split application, separate hearings. The board considers all the evidence which has been presented, together with findings of fact and conclusions of law filed by the parties and issues an initial decision. If the initial decision regarding NEPA and safety matters is favorable, a construction permit is issued to the applicant by the Director of Regulation. The board's initial decision is subject to review by an Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board on its own motion or if exceptions are filed by any party to the proceeding. Under certain circumstances, the initial decision may be reviewed by the Atomic Energy Commissioners.

A public hearing is not mandatory prior to the issuance of an operating license; however, soon after acceptance of the operating license application, the AEC publishes notice that it is considering issuance of the license. The notice provides that any person whose interest may be affected by the proceeding may petition the AEC to hold a hearing. If a public hearing is held, the same decision process described for the construction permit hearing is applicable.

Each license for operation of a nuclear reactor contains Technical Specifications which set forth the particular safety and environmental protection measures to be imposed upon the facility and the conditions of its operation that are to be met in order to assure protection of the health and safety of the public and of the surrounding environment.

Through its inspection and enforcement program the AEC maintains surveillance over construction and operation of a plant throughout its lifetime to assure compliance with AEC regulations for the protection of public health and safety and the environment. In addition, periodic utility reports on operations and monitoring programs are required, as well as special studies in some cases on the possible environmental effects.

All of the foregoing processes were followed in the case of the Oconee Nuclear Power Station, Units 1, 2, and 3, on Lake Keowee. The licensed facilities are being inspected regularly and periodic reports are being furnished by the utility. No unexpected adverse effects have been found in connection with operation of the plants.

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For your information and assistance in replying to Ms. Stiepel, enclosed are copies of the Final Environmental Statement on the Oconee facility, a report entitled "The Safety of Nuclear Power Reactors (Light-Water Cooled) and Related Facilities," booklets entitled "Nuclear Power Plants," "Licensing of Nuclear Power Reactors," and "Federal Regulation of Nuclear Power Plants."

I hope this information is responsive to your constituent's concern. If any additional information is required, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

A. Giambusso

A. Giambusso, Deputy Director  
for Reactor Projects  
Directorate of Licensing

Enclosures:

1. Ltr dtd 12/1/74 A. Stiepel to  
Senator S. Thurmond
2. FES on Oconee
3. Report - The Safety of Nuclear Power  
Reactors
4. Booklets - Nuclear Power Plants
  - Licensing of Nuclear Power  
Reactors
  - Federal Regulation of Nuclear  
Power Plants

L:EP-2	L:EP-2	L:EP-2	L:EP	L:RP	OCR
<i>See previous yellow for concurrences</i> KREUTZER/rw	Scaletti	Dicker	Muller	Giambusso	
12/27/74	12/ /74	12/ /74	12/ /74	12/28/74	12/ /74

Honorable Strom Thurmond

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If I may be of further assistance, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,

A. Giambusso, Deputy Director  
for Reactor Projects  
Directorate of Licensing

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-Licensing of Nuclear Power  
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Power Plants

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DATE	12/24/74	12/24/74	12/24/74	12/16/74	12/ /74	12/ /74