



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

JUL 17 1980

The Honorable Wendell H. Ford
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Ford:

This is in response to your letter of June 25, 1980 with regard to the use of an independent engineer to periodically review the Marble Hill construction activities.

As you recognize we are engaging the services of independent engineering consultants to review and study the problems associated with concrete construction at the Marble Hill site, specifically in the area of honeycombing, sand seams, sand pockets, and voids. The consultants selected for this work were selected from a list of fourteen (14) candidates following consultation with Mr. Thomas Dattilo. The specific persons selected were Mr. Alfred L. Parme, Consulting Engineer of San Diego, California and Mr. Roland C. Hamm, of Hamm Engineers, Inc. of San Diego, California. Mr. Dattilo indicated his confidence in both individuals after reviewing their qualifications as well as a previous report prepared by Mr. Hamm for the NRC about 1 1/2 years ago on problems associated with concrete construction at another site.

While we have engaged independent engineering consultants to assist us in determining the adequacy of existing concrete work, we believe that it is unnecessary to use independent consultants on a regular basis to evaluate all aspects of future construction at the Marble Hill site and would represent improper expenditures of public funds. NRC inspectors and available technical expertise on the NRC Staff generally have the requisite ability to assess the adequacy of construction of nuclear projects and their conformance to the Commission's safety requirements. We believe that this capability has been amply demonstrated at many nuclear facilities and by enforcement actions in those cases where problems were identified. You may be assured that we will seek the services of independent engineering consultants in the future if their assistance is necessary to our inspection efforts at the Marble Hill site.

The determination of when to utilize such a consultant rests with the inspection staff of the Office of Inspection and Enforcement on the basis of technical need. Requests for such assistance can be initiated by the regional construction branch chief. In certain instances the initiation may be within headquarters of the Office of Inspection and Enforcement. Assistance may be requested if the NRC's technical staff requires an independent review to arrive at a consensus on a particular technical issue, if a particular type of technical specialist is not employed by the NRC, or if there are scheduling difficulties due to other work that requires additional assistance to thoroughly fulfill our responsibilities.

The Commission and its staff continues to share your concern for the adequacy of construction at Marble Hill. We will continue to focus the inspection program on the types of problems found in the past at Marble Hill, but at the same time continue to monitor and be alert for any other possible problems that may be evidenced as construction continues. Our goal has been, and remains, with regard to construction, to minimize errors and, if errors are discovered, to require systematic review of their causes and to require prompt and effective corrective action.

Sincerely,

~~(Signed) William J. Dircks~~

William J. Dircks
Acting Executive Director
for Operations