

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

December 1, 1975

870-7112

Mr. R.S. Boyd, Acting Director
Division of Reactor Licensing
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS
POOR QUALITY PAGES

RE: Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant (Docket Nos.
50-282 and 50-306, License Nos. DPR-42 and DPR-60)

Dear Mr. Boyd:

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, an intervenor in the ongoing licensing hearing for the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, has received a copy of an Unusual Event Report from the Licensee dated November 14, 1975.

The Report indicates that the release rate of long-lived halogens and particulates, when averaged over a three-month period and extrapolated at the same release rate for one year, was greater than two times the Design Objective contained in Technical Specification 3.9.2.b. Our review of Technical Specification 3.9.B.1.a indicates that in such circumstances the Licensee is required to identify the cause for such excessive release rates, and to define and initiate a program to reduce the rates. In spite of the rather specific language of that section, the Licensee has failed to make an adequate identification of the causes and to develop a program to reduce the excessive releases.

It has long been the position of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, in this proceeding as well as in the Monticello licensing proceeding and the Appendix I rulemaking hearing, that routine releases of radioactive plants can and should be significantly reduced. In this instance, the Agency has the following specific concerns:

1. Further explanation of the cause of this excessive release of halogens and particulates is required. The only explanation given by the company is that "abnormal amounts of I-131 and Co-58 were released from Unit 1 Containment" as a result of "required purging to permit maintenance." It is of concern to the Agency that routine maintenance would cause the release of excessive amounts of radioactive gaseous materials. If extra purging is necessary due to steam leaks in the containment or other causes, this should be fully investigated.

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Mr. R.S. Boyd, Acting Director
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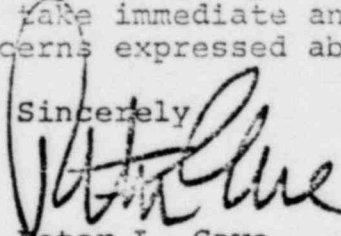
2. Information should be provided as to the extent to which materials released during maintenance purges are treated in the plant's gaseous emission treatment system. If such releases are not treated, explanation and justification should be provided.

3. Technical Specifications 3.9.B.1.a and 6.7.B.2 require written Unusual Event Reports to be submitted "within 30 days." Submission of such a report on November 14 identifying excessive release rates from May 11, 1975, through August 10, 1975, does not seem timely.

4. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency does not believe that, merely because there is some delay in the ultimate implementation of Appendix I, the Licensee should be allowed to violate the provisions of its existing Technical Specifications with impunity.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency requests that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission take immediate and meaningful action to insure that the concerns expressed above are addressed.

Sincerely



Peter L. Gove
Executive Director

cc: Jay Silberg, Esq.
O. Gregory Lewis, Esq.
L.O. Mayer

FROM Sen. Walter F. Mondale	CONTROL NUMBER 9561	FILE LOCATION
	DATE OF DOCUMENT 12-10-75	ACTION COMPLETION DEADLINE 1-2-76
TO NRC	ACTION PROCESSING DATES	
	Acknowledged _____	_____ Chairman
	Interim Reply _____	_____ Director of Regulation
	Final _____	X Omitted

DESCRIPTION Ltr. Original Copy Other

Encl. ltr. fm. Steven J. Gadler concerning radioactive releases from Prairie Island nuclear reactor and loading of plutonium at Big Rock Point and Midland Plants

SECY 76-0907

REMARKS

REF: EDO 9239

Return incoming with reply.

REFERRED TO	DATE	IS NOTIFICATION TO THE JCAE RECOMMENDED?
Knuth f/action	12-19-75	_____
		Cys. RUSCHÉ
		Chapman
		Shapar
		Docket Nos. 50-282, 306
		PDR 50-155
		50-329, 330

DO NOT DETACH THIS COPY

DIRECTOR OF REGULATION
COMMUNICATIONS CONTROL

Form HQ-32 (1-73)
USAEC

No. 76-0907

Logging Date 12/17/75

NRC SECRETARIAT

TO: Commissioner _____ Date 12/17
 Exec. Dir./Oper. Gen. Counsel
 Cong. Liaison Solicitor
 Public Affairs Secretary

Incoming: Walter F. Mondale
From: US Senate

To: NRC Date 12/10/75
Subject: "Uncontrolled" radioactive releases from
Prairie Island nuclear reactor

Prepare reply for signature of:

- Chairman
- Commissioner _____
- EDO, GC, CL, SOL, PA, SECY *
- Signature block omitted
- _____
- Return original of incoming with response

Recd Off. Dir.
Date 12/19/75
Time 11:00

- For direct reply*
- For appropriate action
- For information
- For recommendation

SUSPENSE DATE: 1/2/76

Remarks: Cy of incoming to D&SS & OGC
Ref: Secy ticket #76-0453, Mondale to NRC & reply by
Dircks dtd 10/16 (In Secy Records)
Ltr in Galler only in R

For the Commission: PK

*Send three (3) copies of reply to Secy Mail Facility

P

FD

United States Senate

FILE CODE: AE: 1

DATE: 12/10/75

RE: Northern States Power Co.

Mr. Steven J. Gadler
2120 Carter Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION OF THE ATTACHED LETTER, AND FOR A
REPORT TO ME, IN DUPLICATE TO ACCOMPANY RETURN OF ENCLOSURES.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please refer to previous correspondence.

RESPECTFULLY REFERRED TO:

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street
Washington, D.C.

PLEASE REFER RESPONSE TO ATTENTION OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBER
OF MY STAFF, ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE ENVELOPE ONLY.

Jan Welsh

THANK YOU.

WALTER F. MONDALE
U. S. S.

December 1, 1975

The Honorable Walter F. Mondale
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Mondale:

Thank you for your reponse to my letter of concern regarding the "uncontrolled" radioactive releases from the Prairie Island nuclear reactor and the inept handling by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Since my letter to you, Northern States Power Company has announced that the reactor emitted radioactivity in excess of its design objectives for the 13-week period ended August 10th. The Company further admits that its design objectives will be exceeded for a year if the rate continues. These are the levels that NSP agreed to operate within when it applied for its license to operate. Now the Company claims that these levels were only guidelines and that no corrective action is necessary since the releases present "no threat to public health." (Since there is no safe level of exposure to radioactivity, NSP is making a statement that no scientific body can support.)

Further, NSP withheld its report for the 13-week period from the NRC for more than 90 days -- apparently in violation of licensing requirements for timeliness. What is the NRC doing about this?

As a board member of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, I well remember NSP approaching this body asking to be released from what it referred to as its "moral" commitments to operate its Monticello reactor within emission levels promised at the time of licensing. The PCA board refused to release the Company from those commitments. . . but to no avail. The AEC ignored the Company's commitments to the public, allowing the Company to operate at AEC levels.

It appears that NSP will promise anything at time of licensing -- and do as it damned well pleases once the license is granted. All with the sanction of the NRC.

I believe that activities of the former AEC and present NRC have so stressed promotion of nuclear reactors that there has been a serious erosion of regulation and control of utilities -- so that utilities now appear to be making their own regulatory decisions.

An extremely serious example is the decision of Consumers Power Company in Midland, Michigan to load plutonium in its Big Rock nuclear plant. In May of '75, the NRC proposed a delay of three years in the use of plutonium recycle fuel because of concerns of a growing number of scientists and citizens. In June, Consumers Power Company announced it would continue to load plutonium at Big Rock. The NRC has confirmed that plutonium is presently loaded there -- and that the Company also plans to use plutonium at its nuclear reactor in Midland, Michigan which is presently under construction. Is this a decision the Company is now allowed to make? How can they do this

without a public hearing? How can the NRC allow it? Isn't this in violation of NEPA?

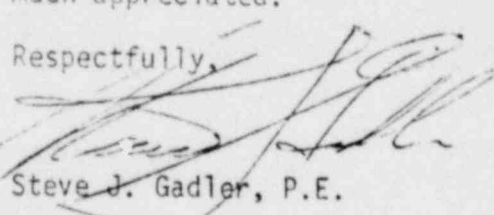
As you know, the state of Minnesota fought for the right to set its own standards of radioactive releases. . . and that subsequent court decisions ruled that we had no legal right to protect our citizens with stricter standards. Now it appears that federal emission levels are recognized by NSP as being no more than "guidelines" or "aims".

In the past, when the potential serious health effects have been pointed out of reactors operating at maximum allowable federal standards, we have been informed that a plant would not be allowed to reach those levels of radioactive release. Yet it appears that design objectives for licensing reactors are no more than public relations tools, devoid of regulatory power or intent. At what point then will the NRC take action to protect the public? Are there, in fact, any meaningful standards for protection of public health and safety?

The amount of radioactive releases from Prairie Island is serious. . . and increasing at alarming rates. Yet federal standards for Prairie Island (and other reactors) allow releases to exceed design objectives -- in the case of Prairie Island, by eight times -- before a plant shutdown is required.

I call your attention to this serious problem because of the need to put a brake on what is becoming a runaway technology and an uncontrolled industry. Any information you can give me regarding the questions raised here would be much appreciated.

Respectfully,



Steve J. Gadler, P.E.

Enclosures:

1. Letter from PCA to NRC re: excessive radioactive emissions from Prairie Island.
2. Newspaper item on same subject. - *not enclosed when received by NRC*

C.C.

Mrs. Marion Watson, Chairperson, Minn. Pollution Control Agency
Dr. Charles Huver, Twin Cities Rep, Northern Environmental Council
Charles Dayton, Esq., Attorney, Sierra Club
Dr. S. Steven Chapman, Minn. Public Interest Research Group
Dr. Don Skinner, President, Minn. Env. Cont. Citizens Assoc.
Milton Pelletier, President, Minn. Conservation Federation
Dr. Rodney Loper, President, Clear Air Clear Water