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DUKE POWER COMPANY REGION II

POWER BUILDING

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WILLIAM O. PARKER, JR.
VICE PRESIDENT
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May 19, 1981

TELEPHONE: AREA 704
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Mr. James P. O'Reilly, Director
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Region II
101 Marietta Street, Suite 3100
Atlanta, Georgia 30303



Re: Oconee Nuclear Station
Docket Nos. 50-269, -270, -287

On May 7, 1981 your office was notified that a potentially reportable incident had occurred at Oconee. This incident concerned the adequacy of separation between the new spent fuel rack modules recently installed in the common spent fuel pool for Units 1 and 2. Since that time, a re-evaluation of the separation has been performed and Duke Power Company now considers that this incident is not reportable per the Oconee Technical Specifications. For your information, the following paragraphs provide a discussion of this incident.

Installation of the new Oconee spent fuel racks was performed between January and April, 1981. Due to the "as-built" dimensional restrictions of the common spent fuel pool for Units 1 and 2, the rack modules were installed with a smaller "rack-to-rack" separation gap than had been previously considered, based upon design drawings of the pool. A review by Westinghouse, the manufacturer of the new racks, determined that installation of the racks with 0.75 inch separation between modules would be sufficient to preclude rack-to-rack interaction during a design seismic event.

Subsequent review by Westinghouse, however, after completion of the rerack project, indicated that a minimum separation of 0.80 inch is required to assure that rack-to-rack impact does not occur during a seismic event. By this time, spent fuel had been loaded into the new racks, effectively making them "operable". Therefore, on May 6, 1981, Duke Power determined that the potentially insufficient separation of the modules should be reported to Region II of the NRC pursuant to Oconee Technical Specification 6.6.2.1.a(9) because licensing submittals made by Duke to support the approval of the reracking, as well as the NRC Safety Evaluation Report issued with the approval, implied that the racks would be installed such that impact between the racks would not occur during an earthquake.

On May 12, 1981, Duke requested Westinghouse to review their seismic analysis again to confirm the validity of the new 0.80 inch specification. In parallel to this analytical effort, work was begun at Oconee to move all modules until a minimum spacing of 0.80 inch was achieved.

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On May 14, 1981, Westinghouse reported to Duke that a rack-to-rack separation of 0.750 inch was acceptable for the Oconee spent fuel pool. Based upon this finding, the racks were sufficiently separated at all times while loaded with fuel to preclude rack-to-rack interaction during an earthquake, and Duke Power Company therefore does not consider this matter to be reportable pursuant to Oconee Technical Specifications.

It should be noted that although the rack-to-rack spacing was questionable during this incident, the rack module-to-pool wall spacing was always sufficient to prevent rack-to-wall impact during an earthquake. Additionally, the rack modules have now been shifted to a clear rack-to-rack spacing of 0.80 inch for an additional margin of safety.

Very truly yours,

William O. Parker, Jr.

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