

GENERAL ELECTRIC

NUCLEAR ENERGY
ENGINEERING
DIVISION

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, P.O. BOX 460, PLEASANTON, CALIFORNIA 94566

February 9, 1983

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Ref: License R-33, Docket 50-73

Dear Dr. Denton:

During routine quarterly maintenance activities at the General Electric Nuclear Test Reactor (NTR), Vallecitos Nuclear Center (VNC), on January 31, 1983, Safety Rod #4 failed to separate from the electromagnet upon initiation of a scram signal. This is considered to be reportable under Section 11.(2) of the Technical Specifications of License R-33.

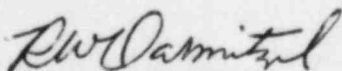
The rod failed to separate from the electromagnet during the rod inflight time tests. The rod had previously been successfully tested on January 14, 1983. The magnet and anvil (the portion of the safety rod in contact with the magnet) were separated, their faces were cleaned, and the magnet position was adjusted. However, after reconnection the rod still failed to separate, even when the power leads to the magnet were disconnected.

The magnet was replaced, and the safety rod performed satisfactorily. Tests will be run to attempt to determine the cause of the malfunction. The replacement magnet is an improved design developed in 1980. All of the old design magnets were replaced on all safety rods prior to reactor startup on February 2.

This occurrence posed no threat to the general public or to VNC employees as only one of the four safety rods is sufficient to shut the reactor down (the other three rods performed in a satisfactory manner).

The NRC-Region V Office was notified by telephone and in writing as required by License R-33.

Sincerely,



R. W. Darmitzel, Manager
Irradiation Processing Operation

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cc: USNRC-Region V

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