



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

Handwritten notes: 7/23
Blair
Linda
Mike

April 22, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Chairman
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Curtiss
Commissioner Remick
Commissioner de Planque

FROM: James M. Taylor
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: NUMARC DELAY IN RESOLVING THERMO-LAG 330-1 FIRE BARRIER PROBLEMS

In response to the Federal grand jury investigation into the Thermo-Lag issues, utility licensees are withdrawing their direct participation in the Nuclear Management and Resources Council (NUMARC)-sponsored fire barrier test program. This has led to at least a three to four month delay in the start of the program. Further delays in the test program could prolong final resolution of the Thermo-Lag problem.

I am concerned that NUMARC and the individual utilities are not sufficiently sensitive to the importance of timely resolution of the technical concerns relating to the use of Thermo-Lag fire barriers. I want to learn more about the scope and schedule of the test program envisioned by NUMARC and the followup actions planned by the licensees. To this end, and to focus management attention on the importance of resolving the technical issues on a generic and plant-specific basis in a timely manner, I plan to issue the enclosed letter to NUMARC 7 working days after the date of this memorandum.

Handwritten signature of James M. Taylor
James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

cc: SECY
OGC
OCA
OPA
OIG

Enclosure:
Proposed letter to J. Colvin
from J. Taylor

Handwritten in a circle: 9305210094 XA

Handwritten: H/14



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

Mr. Joseph F. Colvin
President and Chief Executive Officer
Nuclear Management and Resources Council
1776 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006-3706

Dear Mr. Colvin:

It has been reported that in response to the Federal grand jury investigation into the Thermo-Lag issues, utility licensees are withdrawing their direct participation in the NUMARC-sponsored fire barrier testing program. This is prolonging final resolution of the Thermo-Lag problem.

I am concerned that individual utilities are not sufficiently sensitive to the importance of timely resolution of concerns relating to the use of Thermo-Lag fire barriers in licensed facilities. I want to learn more about the scope of the test program now envisioned by NUMARC. Specifically, I am interested in what types and percentage of existing configurations at affected plants will be tested and how utilities will address those configurations particular to their facilities that are not tested under the NUMARC program. In addition, I want to know more about the course NUMARC and the utilities have charted to attain final resolution of the problem and when final resolution will be achieved.

As you know, the NRC recently testified before Congress on the Thermo-Lag issues. In its testimony, the NRC made commitments to Congress that the Thermo-Lag fire barriers would be compensated for, in the short term, by the use of firewatches and, in the longer term, by development of corrective actions and permanent solutions that would result from, in large part, the outcome of testing to be conducted by NUMARC in concert with the affected utilities. Thus, it is essential that we understand the scope and timing of the industry testing program in order to assess the adequacy of the program to develop long-term corrective actions.

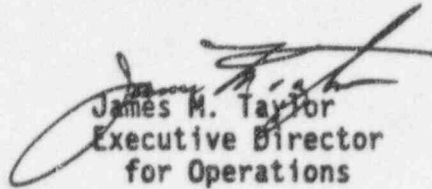
Although NUMARC took the lead for developing an overall industry response, I must emphasize that it is the individual responsibility of each reactor licensee to ensure that its facility fully conforms to NRC requirements. Our review of licensee responses to Generic Letter 92-08, "Thermo-Lag 330-1 Fire Barriers," will focus on the individual resolution plans and the timeliness of the completion schedules.

Mr. Joseph Colvin

-2-

I suggest we meet at the management level in the very near future to discuss how NUMARC intends to ensure that this generic issue is promptly resolved. If NUMARC is not able to promptly resolve this matter, the NRC will be forced to take more direct action with the affected utilities.

Sincerely,


James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations