

50-277/278



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

December 2, 1994

Mr. Richard Ochs  
Maryland Safe Energy Coalition  
P.O. Box 33111  
Baltimore, MD 21218

Dear Mr. Ochs:

I have received the press release dated October 6, 1994, in which the Maryland Safe Energy Coalition requests action with regard to the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station of PECO Energy Company (PECO). This request is being treated as a petition in accordance with 10 CFR 2.206 of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) regulations.

As stated in the press release, the Coalition requests that the NRC (1) immediately shut down both reactors at Peach Bottom until the risk of fire near electrical control cables due to combustible insulation is corrected; (2) suspend the Peach Bottom license until an analysis of the synergistic effects of cracks in multiple parts is conducted; (3) immediately shut down both reactors at Peach Bottom until all safety class component parts in both reactor vessels, including the cooling system, the heat transfer system and the reactor core, are inspected; and (4) immediately shut down both reactors at Peach Bottom pending correction of numerous equipment problems identified in recent NRC inspection reports.

As the bases for these requests, the press release and an article from the September 30, 1994, issue of the Baltimore Sun state that the manufacturer of Thermo-Lag insulation was indicted on criminal charges of falsifying tests of the effectiveness of the insulation as a fire barrier; fire near the electrical control cables, due to combustible Thermo-Lag insulation, could cause a catastrophic meltdown; cracks were discovered in the structural support (core shroud) for the reactor fuel in Reactor 3; the NRC discovered that on August 3, 1994, both reactors had no emergency cooling water for approximately 1 hour; and according to an NRC report dated August 16, 1994, numerous chronic problems exist at Peach Bottom including cooling tower leaks, coolant injection system vibration, injection valve failures, feedwater vibrations and leakage, fuel pool hot spots, incore probe failures, auxiliary boiler unreliability, valve failures, air solenoid failure, and hydraulic leaks and malfunctions.

Your request for an immediate shutdown of both reactors pending correction of the fire risk is denied. The NRC staff is addressing deficiencies in fire barriers constructed with Thermo-Lag material as part of a Commission-approved action plan, and has issued several Bulletins and a Generic Letter to the nuclear industry to provide information and guidance. PECO has identified those fire barrier systems constructed with Thermo-Lag 330 and has declared those fire barriers inoperable. In keeping with the Peach Bottom Technical Specifications, PECO has instituted compensatory measures (fire watches) as approved by the NRC. Accordingly, the staff concludes that PECO has taken

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appropriate measures to reduce the fire risk and that immediate suspension of the license is not warranted.

Your request for an immediate suspension of the Peach Bottom license pending completion of analyses of the "synergistic effects" of cracks in multiple reactor components is denied. In addition, your request for an immediate shutdown of both reactors until all safety class component parts in both reactor vessels, including the cooling system, the heat transfer system and the reactor core, are inspected is denied. The nuclear industry and the staff are aware of the potential for cracking in reactor pressure vessel internal components. PECO conducts an inservice inspection program for reactor pressure vessel internal components, as prescribed by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code. PECO also inspects certain internal components as part of an augmented inspection program that is not specifically required by the Code. Specific components included in Peach Bottom's inspection program include core spray spargers, shroud access hole covers, jet pump components, top guides and in-core instrumentation. The NRC staff performs routine inspections of licensee-implemented inservice inspection programs, including the program at Peach Bottom.

The Boiling Water Reactor Owners Group has addressed the issue of cracking in the reactor pressure vessel internal components by recommending that BWR licensees perform inspections of such components pursuant to vendor recommendations of the General Electric Company. PECO has conducted enhanced visual inspection of the Peach Bottom Unit 3 core shroud, and based on the results of that inspection, the staff concluded that the observed crack indications did not render unsafe the continued operation of Unit 3 during the remainder of the current operating cycle. The staff reviewed the licensee's analysis and determined that it is acceptable. The licensee has committed to conduct additional inspections during the refueling outage scheduled to begin in September 1995. Based on preliminary results of PECO's ultrasonic inspections of the Unit 2 core shroud, conducted in September 1994, which showed fewer crack indications than were observed on Unit 3, the licensee and the NRC staff concluded that continued operation for the next operating cycle is safe. Accordingly, the staff concludes that PECO has taken appropriate actions to address the reliability of reactor vessel internal components and that neither an immediate suspension of the license nor an immediate shutdown of the plant is warranted.

Your request for an immediate shutdown of both reactors pending correction of numerous equipment problems identified in recent NRC inspection reports is denied. Despite the August 3, 1994, degraded condition of the Emergency Service Water System (ESW), emergency service water was available to both units and the safety impact of the event was minimal. The ESW system was restored to a fully operable status on August 3, 1994, and there is no safety concern with regard to the operability of safety systems cooled by the ESW system. The August 16, 1994, NRC Inspection Report No. 94-17 listed system and component reliability issues being tracked by PECO for resolution, and the November 4, 1994, NRC Inspection Report 94-21 concluded that although those safety-related equipment problems represent long-term reliability issues, they

do not represent immediate operability concerns or impair the safe operation of either unit. Therefore, your request for an immediate shutdown of both reactors based on ESW operability or equipment reliability issues identified in the August 16, 1994, inspection report is denied.

Your petition has been referred to me pursuant to 10 CFR 2.206 of the Commission's regulations. As provided by Section 2.206, action will be taken on your requests within a reasonable time. I have enclosed for your information a copy of the notice that is being filed with the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Frank J. Miraglia; Acting Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl:  
See next page

\*Previous Concurrence

OFFICE	FDI-2/LA	FDI-2/PM	FDI-2/PD	EMCB/BC *	SPLB/BC *	R-IDRP/SC *
NAME	MO'Brien	JShea	JStolz	JStrosnider	CMCracken	CAnderson
DATE	11/18/94	11/18/94	11/18/94	11/10/94	11/04/94	11/18/94

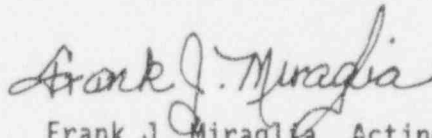
TECH ED *	OGC *	DRPE/D *	ADP *	NR/D
MMejac	GLongo	SVarga	RZimmerman	WRussell
11/16/94	11/22/94	11/23/94	11/23/94	11/18/94

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Your petition has been referred to me pursuant to 10 CFR 2.206 of the Commission's regulations. As provided by Section 2.206, action will be taken on your requests within a reasonable time. I have enclosed for your information a copy of the notice that is being filed with the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Frank J. Miraglia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Frank" and last name "Miraglia" clearly distinguishable.

Frank J. Miraglia, Acting Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl:  
See next page

PECO Energy Company

Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station,  
Units 2 and 3

cc:

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DISTRIBUTION: Letter to Mr. Richard Ochs, Dated: December 2, 1994

Docket File 50-277/50-278 (w/incoming letter)

PUBLIC (w/incoming letter)

EDO# 10547

EDO Reading

PDI-2 Reading (w/incoming letter)

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