

JUL 26 1984

50-416

The Honorable J. Bennett Johnston
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnston:

In response to your inquiry dated May 31, 1984, let me assure you that the NRC staff is taking all appropriate actions to resolve the outstanding issues on Grand Gulf, Unit 1 in a timely manner to permit a Commission decision to authorize full power operation. We are devoting considerable staff effort to work with the licensee, Mississippi Power and Light Company (MP&L), in the two major problem areas. These areas are 1) resolution of the diesel generator concerns and 2) completion of technical specification revisions.

In regard to the diesel generators, our investigation of the manufacturer, following the crankshaft failure in a Transamerica Delaval, Inc. (TDI) engine at Shoreham in August 1983, revealed serious deficiencies in their quality assurance and design practices. This decreased our confidence in all diesel generators made by TDI. MP&L responded to this situation by forming and chairing an Owner's Group effort to resolve this issue. To expedite our review effort, NRC has formed a TDI Review Group with diesel engine experts as consultants.

At the present time, the Owners Group program, including implementation of Owners Group recommendations at Grand Gulf, has not been completed. In view of the industry experience with failures of key engine components, the NRC staff concluded that inspection of these key engine components was required to provide the needed confidence in the reliability of the Grand Gulf diesels to support full power operation for the interim period pending final resolution of the TDI diesel generator issues.

Your constituent is correct that both TDI diesels were previously disassembled in December 1983-January 1984 to replace questionable piston skirts. However, the inspections performed on many key engine components were not of sufficient scope or methodology to preclude the types of failures which have been experienced in TDI diesel engines in both nuclear and non-nuclear applications. Therefore, on May 22, 1984, the NRC staff issued an order which required disassembly and inspection of one TDI diesel, with inspection of the other engine contingent in part upon favorable results from the inspection of the first engine. We should also point out that the inspections required under the order are similar to those recommended by the TDI Owners Group as part of their Phase I Program for the resolution of known potential problem areas. The Phase I program was conceived by the Owners Group to provide an interim basis for licensing plants pending final completion of the Owners Group Program.

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With respect to technical specifications, they must accurately reflect the analysis and evaluation included in the Final Safety Analysis Report (FSAR) and be consistent with the as-built plant. We have traditionally relied upon the utility to properly develop the specific features of the technical specifications for their plant. MP&L did not perform adequately in this area due to lack of operating staff management attention and the attendant quality assurance measures that should have been in place.

Since the low power license was issued, there have been two extensive reviews performed by MP&L which have resulted in numerous proposed changes to the Grand Gulf Technical Specifications. From June 1982 to September 1983, MP&L proposed some 200 changes to their Technical Specifications and indicated that all necessary corrective actions had been identified. Further investigations by NRC revealed that more changes were required. From March 2, 1984, to the present, MP&L with substantial assistance from their Architect/Engineer and reactor vendor performed another review and identified about 400 additional potential problem areas with the technical specifications. Of these, about 220 required technical specification revisions to resolve. Submittals have been received from MP&L for all proposed changes, and the staff anticipates completion of their safety review by the end of July 1984.

In summary, the NRC is handling the licensing activities for Grand Gulf in a manner consistent with other plants to assure the health and safety of the public. Our actions are being performed as timely as possible to prevent unnecessary delay in plant operation by providing resources to keep the reviews on schedule.

We believe this letter addresses the concerns mentioned in your constituent's letter.

Sincerely,

(Signed) William J. Dircks

William J. Dircks
Executive Director for Operations

DL:LB #4
DHouston/hac
7/ /84

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MDuncan
7/ /84

DBI:PO
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NRC PDR*

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D. Houston

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LB #4 r/f

E. Adensam

D. Eisenhut/M. Jambor

Attorney, OELD

T. Novak/P. O'Brien

E. Case

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