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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION 84 001-2 P12:05 BEFORE THE ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD

In the Matter of)			
HOUSTON LIGHTING & POWER COMPANY, ET AL.) Docket N	los.	50-498 50-499	
(South Texas Project, Units 1 and 2))			

APPLICANTS' RESPONSE TO NRC STAFF BRIEF ON THE REPORTABILITY OF THE QUADREX REPORT

I. Introduction

By Memorandum and Order dated June 22, 1983 (Memorandum and Order), the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (Board) directed the NRC Staff to brief a number of questions related to the reportability of the Quadrex Report 1/ pursuant to various NRC reporting requirements and invited the other parties to respond. On August 24, 1984, the Staff submitted its brief 2/ in which it concluded that all matters reportable under 10 C.F.R. § 50.55(e) have been reported to the NRC and that 10 C.F.R. Part 21 imposes no additional reporting obligations. The Staff also concluded

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Design Review of Brown & Root Engineering Work for the South Texas Project (May, 1981).

NRC Staff Response to Licensing Board Memorandum and Order Regarding the Reportability of the Quadrex Report (August 24, 1984) (Staff Brief).

- 2 -

that, pursuant to the McGuire 3/ line of precedents, the Quadrex Report should have been provided to the Board when issued.

While Applicants concur with the Staff's position on the reportability of the Quadrex Report pursuant to section 50.55(e) and Part 21, we do not agree that the Report was relevant and material within the meaning of the McGuire precedents or that HL&P was tardy in bringing it to the attention of the Board.

II. Reportability of the Quadrex Report Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. § 50.55(e)

As the Staff recognized, in order for a matter to be reportable pursuant to section 50.55(e), three criteria must be met. Staff Brief at 2-3. First, there must be found a deficiency in design or construction. 4/ Second, the deficiency must have the potential, if left uncorrected, to affect adversely the safety of plant operations. Finally, the deficiency must also represent either:

- (i) A significant breakdown in any portion of the quality assurance program . . . or
- (ii) A significant deficiency in final design as approved and released for construction such that the design does not conform to the criteria and bases stated in the safety analysis report or construction permit; or
- (iii) A significant deficiency in construction of or significant damage to a structure, system, or component . . . or

^{3/} Duke Power Co. (William B. McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2), ALAB-143, 6 AEC 623 (1973).

The Staff indicated that the "regulation plainly applies to deficiencies in either design or construction." Staff Brief at 3 (emphasis added). HL&P's reporting practices are consistent with the Staff's interpretation.

(iv) A significant deviation from performance specifications . . .

10 C.F.R. §§ 50.55(e)(1)(i)-(iv). Since a matter must meet each of the three criteria described above in order to be reportable pursuant to section 50.55(e), there may be numerous reasons why a particular matter may not be reportable.

In evaluating whether HL&P met its reporting obligations under section 50.55(e), it should be recognized that that provision does "not provide precise definitions for events that are reportable," and that "[m]uch is left to the judgment of the licensees' staff and of the NRC Staff." Virginia Electric and Power Co. (North Anna Nuclear Power Station, Units 1 and 2), LBP-78-10, 7 NRC 295, 299 (1978).

The NRC Staff indicated that in both its original evaluation of the reportability of the various Quadrex findings, 5/ as well as in its most recent reevaluation in response to the Board's inquiries, the same conclusion was reached: "all reportable Quadrex-related items were in fact reported [pursuant to section 50.55(e)]." 6/ Staff Brief at 10.

^{5/} Inspection & Enforcement Report 82-12 (NUREG-0948).

The Quadrex findings were grouped into two broad categories:
"discipline" findings (contained in section 4 of the Report)
setting forth specific conclusions regarding particular
aspects of the various technical disciplines reviewed; and
"generic" findings (contained in section 3) providing some
of Quadrex's more general observations identified on the
basis of that review. The Staff stated that the Quadrex
generic findings were not separately evaluated since they
were "based on an evaluation of the discipline findings and
do not represent new findings." Staff Brief at 9.

Applicants concur with the Staff's conclusion that all reportable matters addressed in the Quadrex Report have been reported. That conclusion has been repeatedly validated by the two evaluations performed by the Staff (in NUREG-0948 and in the enclosure to its brief), by Bechtel's analyses 7/ and by HL&P's reviews.

III. Reportability of the Quadrex Report Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. Part 21

The Board also requested the Staff "to brief whether any or all of the Quadrex Report was reportable under the requirements of 10 C.F.R. Part 21 " Memorandum and Order at 7. In response, the Staff stated that section 50.55(e) "imposed at least as strict requirements as did Part 21 on the Applicants' reporting of the Quadrex Report . . " and concluded that "Part

Since the generic findings were "based on the detailed evaluation of each discipline" (Quadrex Report at 3-1), the Staff correctly concluded that its evaluation of the reportability of the various discipline findings was sufficient to resolve any questions regarding reportability of the generic findings under section 50.55(e). The Staff also noted Bechtel's conclusion that with one exception (Finding 3.2(1)), the generic findings raised no concerns not addressed in the specific discipline findings. NUREG-0948 at 22-23. Since Finding 3.2(1) was not reportable under section 50.55(e), none of the generic findings were reportable.

^{7/} An Assessment of the Findings in the Quairex Corporation Report dated May, 1981 (March, 1982).

21 in fact imposed no requirement upon the Applicants (insofar as reporting of Quadrex is concerned) not covered by Section 50.55(e) * 8/ Staff Brief at 6. We concur.

As the Staff recognized, Part 21 imposes narrower reporting requirements than does section 50.55(e). The Staff's published guidance on the application of Part 21 states that "the threshold levels of reporting [between Part 21 and section 50.55(e)] vary greatly, with [the former], the more restrictive." 9/ It also states that section 50.55(e) "requires reporting that would not be reported [sic] under Part 21", and that "[t]he majority of items subject to reporting under [section] 50.55(e) would not fit the definition in Part 21 for a 'defect' involving a 'substantial safety hazard.'" NUREG-0302 at 21.21(b)(1)-16, 17.

Accordingly, the Staff correctly concluded that HL&P had not failed to report any matters which met the Part 21 reporting criteria.

IV. Furnishing of the Quadrex Report to the Board Pursuant to the McGuire Precedents

The Board also asked the Staff to brief "whether any or all of the Quadrex Report was reportable . . . under the notification requirement spelled out in decisions such as" McGuire and

As with section 50.55(e), Part 21 provides no "precise definition" of reportable matters, and "much is left to the judgment of the licensees' staff and of the NRC Staff."

North Anna, 7 NRC at 299.

^{9/} Remarks Presented (Questions/Answers Discussed) at Public Meetings to Discuss Regulations (10 CFR Part 21) for Reporting of Defects and Noncompliance (July 12-26, 1977), NUREG-0302, Rev. 1 at 21.21(b)(1)-11 (NUREG-0302).

Vogtle. 10/ Memorandum and Order at 7. The Staff concluded that the Quadrex Report was "relevant and material to the issues addressed in Phase I . . . " and that "the Report should have been provided to the Licensing Board when issued." Staff Brief at 8. Although we acknowledge the subjective nature of the judgments involved, we believe that the Staff's conclusions are in error.

The requirement that "parties [to NRC proceedings] must inform the presi ng board and other parties of new information which is relevant and material to the matters being adjudicated" was originally articulated in the McGuire decision. McGuire, 6 AEC at 625. There, the applicant had failed to inform the board of significant changes in its QA organization despite the fact that the adequacy of that organization was being adjudicated. The Appeal Board held that unless such information was provided to the adjudicatory boards in a timely fashion, they would be "passing upon evidence which would not accurately reflect existing facts." Id. at 625-26. Thus, the purpose of the notification requirement is to ensure that NRC adjudicatory boards have complete and current information regarding the issues before them.

The Appeal Board has indicated that in cases of "reasonable doubt," information which may be deemed relevant and material "should be disclosed for the board to decide its true worth."

Metropolitan Edison Co. (Three Mile Island Nuclear Generation

^{10/} Georgia Power Co. (Alvin W. Vogtle Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2), ALAB-291, 2 NRC 404 (1975).

Station, Unit 1), ALAB-774, ______ NRC ____, slip op. at 12 (June 19, 1984). It has also recognized, however, that "the mere existence of a question or discussion about the possible materiality of information" does not "necessarily" make the information material (Consumers Power Co. (Midland Plant, Units 1 and 2) ALAB-691, 16 NRC 887, 914 (1982), and has cited the Commission's guidance in Virginia Electric and Power Co. (North Arna Power Station, Units 1 and 2), CLI-76-22, 4 NRC 480, 487-88, 491 (1976), that in determining materiality, one should "use common sense and consider the context and stage of the licensing process in which the materiality issue arises." Midland, 16 NRC at 914. Applicants believe that the Quadrex Report was not relevant and material within the meaning of the McGuire precedents.

The Staff argues that "central underlying issues [in the Phase I proceeding] were quality assurance and the safe construction of the South Texas Plant" and that "[t]he Quadrex Report, raising as it does important questions relative to the design work of Brown & Root and the quality control in that design, necessarily raised related questions on the adequacy of the construction work at the site." Staff Brief at 8. Thus, it concludes that the Report was relevant and material to the Phase I issues.

A fair assessment of the Quadrex Report's relevance and materiality can only be made, however, if the Phase I issues are meaningfully characterized. In our view, the Staff's character-

ization of those issues, as encompassing QA and the safety of construction, is far too broad. The issues litigated in Phase I involved construction QA and specific alleged construction deficiencies, as well as HL&P's managerial character and competence to operate the South Texas Project (STP) in light of those alleged deficiencies. The issues did not address every aspect of quality assurance or of construction at STP. As we describe below, we believe it was reasonable to view the Phase I issues as not encompassing the adequacy of Brown & Root's design or design process.

The Phase I proceeding grew, in large part, out of the Commission's directive in CLI-80-32 (12 NRC 281 (1980)), mandating an expedited hearing on various QA/QC issues and their implications regarding HL&P's character and competence. That decision resulted from the history of enforcement actions taken at STP, in particular the April 30, 1980 Show Cause Order (Show Cause Order) and Investigation Report 79-19.

In the Show Cause Order, Applicants were directed to show cause why all "safety-related construction activities on the South Texas Project" should not be stopped, based upon the results of various investigation and inspection findings involving construction-related activities such as allegations of harassment and intimidation of QC inspectors, construction deficiencies and falsification of construction records. Show Cause Order at 12 (emphasis added). The Show Cause Order

expressed no concern regarding design QA activities. 11/ It provided, in fact, that a "[p]otential for future significant construction deficiencies exists if the quality assurance program is not improved prior to proceeding to the more complex construction stages of this project," and that the Office of Inspection and Enforcement (OIE) would review Applicants' responses to the Order in order "to determine whether safety related construction will be conducted in accordance with Appendix B . . . " Id. at 11, 17 (emphasis added).

The central document addressed in Phase I, however, was
Investigation Report 79-19, whose findings furnished the basis of
most of the issues and contentions. That Investigation, as
described by the Staff, concentrated on construction-related
concerns:

The investigation/inspection effort was divided into two parts. The first was the investigation of the specific allegations recently received from a worker at the South Texas Project. The second was the inspection of selected construction activities to assess the effectiveness of the QA/QC program for the South Texas Project . . .

* * * *

The following site activities were reviewed to determine if an effective QA/QC program is being implemented

In fact, although construction was voluntarily stopped on safety-related concrete and welding activities, design work continued without objection by the NRC Staff.

[P]roduction, placement, testing and curing of concrete and . . . Cadwelding 12/

Installation and testing of . . . backfill

Installation and welding of safety-related piping . . .

Fabrication, installation and welding or bolting of structural components

Nondestructive examination (NDE) of pipe and structural welding

Training and qualification of inspection, testing, welding and NDE personnel

Nonconformance Reports and Field Requests for Engineering Action . . .

Audit and inspection activities.

Investigation Report 79-19 at 5-6 (emphasis added). 13/

The issues admitted by the Board in Phase I, as a result of CLI-80-32, did not address Brown & Root design activities. Issue A addressed HL&P's competence and character to operate the STP in light of its record of compliance with NRC requirements (viewed without regard to remedial measures) including alleged false statements in the FSAR, prior noncompliances, and alleged abdication of responsibility and knowledge of construction

^{12/} Investigation Report 79-19 provided that "[a] significant portion of the investigation/inspection effort was concentrated in this area because the majority of the allegations, both past and present, concern the construction and QC inspection activities for the placement of concrete." Investigation Report 79-19 at 5.

^{13/} Similarly, the 22 noncompliances set forth in the Notice of Violation accompanying the Investigation Report related almost exclusively to construction QA procedures, concrete placement activities, welding and nondestructive examination practices and backfill placement procedures.

activities. Second Prehearing Conference Order, Attachment at 1 (December 2, 1980). Neither the alleged false statements, the prior noncompliances, nor the allegations of abdication dealt with Project design activities. 14/

Issue B addressed whether HL&P's remedial measures were sufficient to provide assurance that it has the character and competence to safely operate the STP. Id. at 2. Issue C addressed HL&P's planned organization for operation of STP and alleged deficiencies in its management of construction. Id. Issue D questioned whether the construction QA/QC organizations and practices met Appendix B requirements and whether there was reasonable assurance they would be implemented so that construction would be completed in conformance with applicable requirements. Id. Issue E addressed the adequacy of certain in-place structures at STP. Id. at 3.

Finally, the intervenors' contentions alleged violations of Appendix B resulting from construction activities at the STP site, including surveying, concrete placement, and

^{14/} As the Board recently reiterated, "Issue A inquired into HL&P's managerial character and competence in the context of the particular construction deficiencies encompassed within the Show Cause Order and the accompanying Notice of Violation." Memorandum and Order (July 10, 1984) at 5 (emphasis added).

Cadwelding. 15/ Even the allegations regarding the field design change process did not involve concerns of the sort addressed in the Quadrex Report.

Obviously, in a proceeding as lengthy as Phase I, some peripheral discussion or consideration of design-related matters occurred. However, the mere fact that there were isolated references to design activities would not mean that the Board needed the Quadrex Report to be adequately informed about the predominantly construction-related issues before it, nor that it would have been "passing upon evidence which [did] not accurately reflect existing facts". 16/ McGuire, 6 AEC at 625-26.

Accordingly, it was not unreasonable to view the design concerns addressed in the Quadrex Report as unrelated to the issues and contentions addressed in Phase I. 17/

The alleged violations were as follows: an error in the construction of the Unit 2 Mechanical Electrical Auxiliary Building; the existence of concrete voids in the containment; loss of a field document; the existence of damaged containment membrane seals; missing rebar in the containment building; unverifiable Cadwelds; several allegations regarding inadequacies in the field design change process; falsified construction records; and harassment and intimidation of QC inspectors. Memorandum and Order (August 3, 1979), Attachment at 1-2.

^{16/} Similarly, the Quadrex Report need not have been provided to the Board pursuant to the decision in Tennessee Valley
Authority (Browns Ferry Plant, Units 1, 2 and 3), ALAB-677,
15 NRC 1387, 1393, 1394 (1982) cited by the Staff (Staff Brief at 7), which requires that parties inform adjudicatory boards regarding "modifications and rescissions of important evidentiary submissions..." and "outdated" or "incorrect" information upon which they might otherwise rely.

^{17/} It appears that during the conduct of the Phase I hearing the Staff -- like Applicants -- did not believe that the (footnote continued)

The Staff does not, however, appear to contest directly the fact that design-related issues were not the subject of Phase I. Instead, it argues that design concerns including concerns regarding "quality control in [the] design, necessarily" raise questions regarding construction activities. Staff Brief at 8. Applicants do not agree.

In <u>Pacific Gas and Electric Co</u>. (Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, Units 1 and 2), ALAB-756, 18 NRC 1340 (1983), the intervenors sought a reopening of the record on construction QA issues based upon the existence of design QA deficiencies. In denying the intervenors' motion, the Appeal Board stated:

Although at Diablo Canyon both design and construction quality assurance are parts of a single program, the historical development, organizational structure and responsibilities of each component are different. Similarly, the personnel skills, verification methods and corrective actions applicable to each phase of the programs are different. Therefore, it simply does not follow that merely because the same top management is ultimately responsible for the entire quality assurance program and the details of the program are found in a single manual, the existence of defects in the design aspect of the program are symptomatic of like errors in the construction phase of the program. The many different elements and functioning of each component of the program

⁽footnote continued from previous page)
existence of deficiencies in Brown & Root's engineering
activities were relevant and material to the Phase I issues.
While the Staff introduced into evidence a large number of
OIE reports regarding inspections and investigations of
construction activities at STP, it did not seek to introduce
any of the reports of inspection of Brown & Root engineering
activities that had been conducted by NRC's Vendor Inspection Branch, even though those reports identified a number
of violations.

are such that it would be gross speculation to arrive at the Movants' conclusion based on these two factors alone.

<u>Diablo Canyon</u>, 18 NRC at 1346 (footnotes omitted). The determination that the existence of design or design QA issues does not, <u>per se</u>, raise concerns regarding construction or construction QA matters is particularly apt here. <u>18/</u>

The Staff's brief does not reveal how any of the construction QA deficiencies discussed in Phase I relate to any design concern raised in the Quadrex Report. Applicants do not believe that any such relationship exists. Accordingly, the Quadrex Report was neither relevant nor material to the Phase I issues. The Board had current and complete information regarding the issues before it, and the Report need not have been provided to the Board and the parties under the McGuire precedents.

Even assuming that the Quadrex Report was relevant and material to the Phase I issues, however, Applicants did not fail to provide it to the Board and the parties in a timely manner. The Quadrex Report was presented to HL&P on May 7, 1981.

Inspection and Enforcement Report 82-02 (I&E Report 82-02) at 3, 5. The fact that the Quadrex review was being conducted had been voluntarily disclosed to the NRC Project Manager for STP prior to receipt of the Report and the Report was discussed with him only days after its receipt by HL&P. Id. at 4, 5, 6-7. In fact, HL&P had informed the Project Manager as early as January or February

^{18/} Furthermore, the principal focus of the Report was on the sequence, stage of completion and Brown & Root management of design activities for STP and not on design QA.

that it was contracting with a consulting firm to perform a study of Brown & Root design activities for STP. Id. at 6. OIE personnel were apprised of the Report's existence by HL&P in August. Id. at 4. Copies were also made available for review by OIE in August. Id. at 8, 11-12. After the NRC Staff counsel suggested that HL&P provide the Report to the Board and the parties, HL&P promptly did so. In virtually identical circumstances, the Appeal Board has held that the McGuire reporting requirements were satisfied.

In <u>Three Mile Island 19</u>/ the Appeal Board considered whether the licensee had violated the <u>McGuire</u> reporting requirements with respect to two consultants' reports received by the licensee on February 28, 1983 and March 15, 1983, respectively. In that case, the licensee brought the existence of the consultants' reports to the attention of NRC regional personnel in April and, upon request, provided copies for their review (subject to their return when that review was completed). After the NRC Staff in May "raised questions" regarding the relevance and materiality of the reports, the licensee provided them to the Board and the parties. <u>Three Mile Island</u>, ALAB-774, slip op. at 4-5.

The Appeal Board, in discussing the intervenors' allegation that the licensee's failure to produce the reports sooner and "without reluctance" reflected a lack of integrity stated:

The Staff, in its brief, states that the Three Mile Island Appeal Board "found that ... the information should have been reported ... sooner" Staff Brief at 7 n.3. As described below, the Appeal Board did not conclude that the information in question should have been provided more promptly.

[t]he necessary predicate of such a conclusion, however, is that [the] licensee was legally obligated to release the materials more promptly and "voluntarily" than it, in fact, did. We are unable to reach such a conclusion on the facts of this case.

Id. at 10. The Appeal Board went on to state that:

even though the licensee disputed staff counsel's claim that the material should be submitted . . . [to the Board] the proper course was to disclose the reports. That is exactly what licensee did, within a matter of days from being confronted squarely with the issue by the Staff.

Id. at 13. It further concluded that a licensee is entitled to a "reasonable period of time for internal corporate review" of consultants' reports, 20/ that the time utilized by the licensee was "such a reasonable time," and that "no improper action by licensee" was demonstrated. Id. at 13, 15. The Appeal Board also found it worthy of note that the licensee "initially and voluntarily revealed the documents' existence to NRC regional personnel." Id. at 14 (emphasis in original).

The Appeal Board noted "obvious exceptions" for information which could have "an immediate effect on matters currently being pursued at hearings, or that disclose possible serious safety or environmental problems requiring immediate attention." Id. at 13 n.8. As discussed above, the information in the Quadrex Report was not relevant and material to the Phase I issues, and even if viewed as tangentially related, did not amount to information which would have an "immediate effect" on the hearing issues. Similarly, it raised no serious safety or environmental problems requiring "immediate attention." Id.

In the instant case, HL&P promptly disclosed the existence of the Quadrex Report to the NRC, discussed its findings with the NRC on several occasions and provided it to the Board without "reluctance" upon the Staff counsel's request. Under the circumstances, Applicants were not tardy in providing the Report to the Board.

Even if one were to conclude that the Quadrex Report should have been provided to the Board at an earlier date, however.

HL&P's failure to do so would not reflect adversely on its integrity, honesty or character. The Staff properly recognizes that the Appeal Board in Three Mile Island found "no basis to support an assertion that the licensee had attempted to intentionally conceal information from the NRC," even though it apparently believes that the Three Mile Island decision held that the information in question should have been reported more promptly under the McGuire precedents. Staff Brief at 7 n.3. No such basis is present in this case either, and there are therefore no grounds upon which to conclude that HL&P's handling of the Quadrex Report reflects adversely on its honesty, integrity or character.

V. Factual and Legal Disputes with the Staff's Analysis

In its Memorandum and Order, the Board also asked the parties to "specify any factual . . [or] legal differences of opinion which they may have with the Staff's analysis."

Memorandum and Order at 7. As described above, Applicants have no factual disputes with the Staff's analysis. No relevant questions exist regarding the circumstances of HL&P's reporting of the Quadrex findings or the Report itself pursuant to the various NRC reporting requirements. Applicants' sole legal disagreement with the Staff's analysis is that, under the undisputed factual circumstances, HL&P did not violate its obligations under the McGuire precedents.

VI. Conclusion

In short, Applicants concur with the Staff's determinations that HL&P met its reporting obligations under section 50.55(e) and Part 21 with respect to its reporting of the Quadrex Report. We do not agree, however, that HL&P failed to comply with its McGuire obligations. As described above, it was reasonable to view the design matters addressed in the Quadrex Report as neither relevant nor material to the construction QA and discrete construction issues considered in Phase I and, in any event, the Report was promptly provided to the Board and the parties.

Regardless of whether HL&P did or did not comply with its McGuire

reporting obligations, there is no basis for concluding that it attempted to conceal the Report from the NRC and therefore no basis for impugning its character.

Respectfully submitted,

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BEFORE THE ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD

Docket Nos. 50-498 OL 50-499 OL

In the Matter of

HOUSTON LIGHTING & POWER

COMPANY, ET AL.

(South Texas Project, Units 1)

and 2)

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of the "Applicants' Response to NRC Staff Brief on the Reportability of the Quadrex Report" dated September 28, 1984, has been served on the following individuals and entities by deposit in the United States mail, first class, postage prepaid, or by Express Mail, postage prepaid, as indicated by an asterisk, on this 1st day of October, 1984.

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