



UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20545

NOV 21 1973

Commissioner Richard J. Sullivan
New Jersey Department of
Environmental Protection
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

This is in further reply to your letter of September 27, 1973, concerning allegations about AEC licensee operations at the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant. As I stated in my letter to you of October 9, 1973, the Regulatory staff initiated their investigation of the Oyster Creek allegations on a priority basis. A copy of its Investigation Report is enclosed for your information. The names of the individuals interviewed have been omitted from the investigation report in the interest of protecting their privacy.

I have also enclosed the Report of a Special Inspection conducted by the Regulatory staff on September 10-12, 1973, of the incident that subsequently resulted in the allegations that were referred to you. This inspection was unannounced to the licensee and is in accordance with our routine procedure following unusual abnormal occurrences. As you will note, the findings from the Special Inspection and the Investigation are identical in regard to substantive issues.

To give you a more complete picture of the actions taken by the Regulatory staff related to this abnormal occurrence, I have also enclosed copies of letters sent by the Regulatory staff to the licensee as a result of the Special Inspection and the Investigation. As you know, the Regulatory staff routinely sends to the State of New Jersey copies of all letters relating to inspections, including Inspection Reports, when appropriate, for activities licensed by the AEC in the State of New Jersey. These letters and reports are addressed to the Department of Environmental Protection in accordance with informal agreements with your Governor's office.

In summary, our evaluation of these specific Oyster Creek allegations reconfirmed that no abnormal releases of radioactive materials occurred, that no damage to the plant was sustained, and that the health and safety of the public was not jeopardized. Additionally, a design change has been made to the diesel generators to correct the problem noted in the allegations.

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On the broader issue of the safety of operations at the Oyster Creek plant, AEC Regulatory staff is concerned about the number of problems that have occurred and the large number of violations of AEC requirements that have been identified in past inspections. Although there is no one specific matter of serious concern, the number and scope of the problems lead us to conclude that significant improvements are necessary. Independent of the specific Oyster Creek allegations referred to you, the Regulatory staff had increased its inspection efforts at the site and had conducted meetings with senior management personnel, including the president, of the Jersey Central Power & Light Company. In addition, a meeting was held on November 5, 1973, with the president of General Public Utilities to discuss these matters. If this meeting does not result in substantive improvements, based on the results of augmented AEC inspection efforts, further actions by the AEC will be forthcoming. Our staff has several enforcement options available to it including notices of violations, civil monetary penalties, and orders to modify, suspend or revoke operating licenses.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your kind words about our AEC Regional office staff. The Commission likes to think it has assigned to the field top flight personnel to monitor the activities of our licenses, and your comments confirmed our belief. If I can provide you with any further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

/s/

William O. Doub
Commissioner

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- G. Ertter

Enclosures:

1. Investigation Report #73-01
dtd October 29, 1973
2. Special Inspection Report
#73-15 dtd October 26, 1973
3. Ltr relating to the Inspection
dtd October 29, 1973
4. Ltr relating to the Special
Inspection, dtd October 26,
1973

SEE PREVIOUS YELLOW FOR CONCURRENCES

EW CRESS MC#840612	OFFICE cls	RO	RO:DDFO	RO:DIR	DR
SURNAME	HThornberg	JGDavis	DEKnuth	LMMuntzing	
DATE	11/ /73	11/ /73	11/ /73	11/ /73	



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

TRENTON 08625

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

September 27, 1973

Certified Mail #9836

Commissioner William O. Doub
United States Atomic Energy Commission
1717 H Street, Northwest
Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Commissioner Doub:

Refer to: USAEC Docket 50-219
NJPUC Docket 60-652

A number of years ago the State Government of New Jersey was presented with allegations concerning irregularities connected with the construction of the primary loop for the Oyster Creek Nuclear Electric Generating Station Unit No. 1. The allegations were transmitted to Dr. Roscoe Kandle, who then headed Governor Hughes's Atomic Energy Council. Dr. Kandle elected to advise the then Division of Compliance of these allegations. I am happy to write that the AEC, specifically Mr. Robert Kirkman, then Director of Region I, Division of Compliance, responded immediately and undertook an investigation which essentially substantiated the allegations. Appropriate corrective action was undertaken.

We have been in receipt of a number of anonymous telephone allegations concerning irregularities at Oyster Creek during operation. Some of these allegations if substantiated may have rather severe consequences with respect to the availability of a safety system of the reactor when needed and the overall health and safety of the general public. I am attaching to this letter allegations from a source with the request that an immediate appropriate investigation be undertaken. The Commission is further requested to advise this State Government as to the findings and if indeed the allegations are confirmed, what corrective action can and is being taken. Specifically, did a loss of total electric power take place resulting in inability for any length of time to effect forced convection cooling; and if so, did this result in clad defects and thermal stresses resulting in core structural damage. Finally, is there any substance to the allegation that an abnormal release also occurred.

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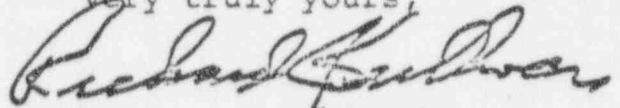
September 27, 19

The allegations relating to an abnormal occurrence were first called to the attention of this Department in an unusual manner. A reporter, John Allen of the Atlantic City Press, called this Department's twenty-four hour line about 9 p.m. on September 8 and was put in touch with our Nuclear Engineer, Charles Amato. Mr. Amato in turn contacted Mr. J. P. O'Reilly of your King of Prussia office and the New Jersey State Police (per standard procedures). Mr. O'Reilly responded immediately and called the plant and the plant superintendent (at his home) then advised Mr. Amato of his findings which did not suggest a core melt-down or near melt-down as the allegations implied. At a meeting on September 14, Mr. O'Reilly discussed the matter with Mr. Amato, advised him a Reactor Inspector had visited Oyster Creek on September 11, and gave Mr. Amato a copy of Oyster Creek Abnormal Occurrence Report No. 73-19, which is PDI material (this abnormal occurrence had been reported to the AEC on the morning of September 8). A copy of the just noted Abnormal Occurrence Report is attached for the sake of completeness. I would be remiss if I failed to commend Mr. O'Reilly for his cooperation and timely response. We have come to expect this of Mr. O'Reilly and his Staff.

You may be interested in noting that two unusual or abnormal occurrences took place at Oyster Creek about a month apart. Each took place on a Friday or Saturday preceding a Lacey Township Planning Board public meeting scheduled to determine if a Building Permit should be issued for the Forked River Station.

I am looking forward to receiving at the earliest possible date your findings in this investigation.

Very truly yours,



Richard J. Sullivan
Commissioner

Encl.

From phone conversation with informant 9/9/73

Shutting down for repair of the snubbers (shock absorbers) the dry well, approximately 30 of them. They were supposed to shut down around midnight, but for some reason they held it off until around daylight yesterday morning. They scrambled the reactor to bring it down and they switched over to their emergency bank of electric and they got a blackout from it.

This left all their equipment inoperable in the whole plant. They had no electric. This would be their core spray system, as I understand it, even their boron system which is the last resort shooting what they call their poison system in these pumps to put this boron and water mixture into the reactor to kill the fission.

During this time, the water level in the reactor, because of the pumps not being operable to bring water into the reactor, dropped down to the dangerous level of 16 inches.

--At one point at one minute (the water level) was 6 ft., another minute 31", then down to 19", then down to 16", which was the lowest point it went. This is water level, I believe, approximately above the fuel assembly.

Everybody that was on the job yesterday was aware of the problem. Electricians on the job when this happened. Their boss was... A lot of times he won't be in (on the night shift)... Fortunately he was in and he was able to put his finger on it (the problem) and get the power back on. If he hadn't been there I don't think anybody else was there with that kind of knowledge.

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The trouble was from the electricians themselves. In the last shut down they had the relay department - another department from out of the area - (I think Allenhurst) they were down doing running tests.

They put a voltage reducer in one of the input electrical. In other words when the reactor shuts down the emergency banks feed in the outside..back through systems that could come through their diesel generators.

They put a tester in there which reduces the power in one of these breakers down to a very minute point to where they can test it with a voltage tester.

They never took this test breaker out. It was a mistake. It should have been taken out and replaced with a normal voltage breaker.

When they switched over to emergency power with the reactor coming down, this little test thing just "popped" because it couldn't handle any amount of juice trying to get over it, into the plant for emergency operations.

So they had a complete blackout. As the electricians put it they didn't have enough power to open the front gate.

Words of a veteran control room operator: He was "scared".

He switched to the coarse spray pumps and they wouldn't work. Switched to other pumps couldn't get any power; finally switched to the emergency diesel generator, but the control room was getting an inoperable signal.

Even though the diesel generators started, the juice was being cut off before it got to the plant. Before it got into the control center where they could make use of it, it was being (

cut off by this little test breaker.

All this time, the pumps weren't bringing any recirculated water back into the reactor. The reactor was getting so hot that was dissipating all this water in there into steam and was dropping this water level down to a very dangerous point.

There was an abnormal release into the atmosphere... I don't know if it went above the AEC restrictions.

Also have a very high xenon content in the air of the dry well, which they haven't opened up yet.

The general feeling of everyone I heard speak there yesterday was they came too close for comfort. Definitely many people "shook up there yesterday."

Joe Carroll, new plant superintendant and Don Reeves, operating supervisor, came storming in there around 6:30 (A.M.)... Joe Carroll jumped out of his car while it was still moving.

There are many guys who won't say what they think because of their job. Even those who laughed at Nadar and Sternglas said yesterday that they believe there should be a complete investigation and testing should be run on this thing to make sure no damage has been done before they let them start it up... They think much stricter safety standards should be imposed on the power company for the operation of this plant. These are guys (who have little) concern or responsibility.

Another workman stated in a conversation that he had heard that the low-low alarm for the reactor cooling water was activated. He further stated that a clock in the plant was 14 minutes slow indicating that they were without power for that period of time. He also stated that he heard that they had some trouble with the diesel generators, but did not know what it was.