



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20585-0001

April 22, 1996

Mr. Paul Gunter, Director
Reactor Watchdog Project
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
1424 16th Street, N.W., #404
Washington, DC 20036

Mr. Shean J. H. BJORALT, Director
Communications and Logistics
Prairie Island Coalition
212 N. 3rd Avenue, #350
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Messrs. Gunter and BJORALT:

This letter acknowledges receipt of an addendum dated March 13, 1995, to your Petition of June 5, 1995. In the addendum, you raised a concern regarding the possibility of circumferentially oriented cracks in the free-span regions of steam generator tubes at Northern States Power Company's Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2.

In the addendum of March 13, 1996, you referred to my March 1, 1996, response to your previous Petition addendum, dated February 19, 1996. You stated that I failed to address the most significant public health and safety issue facing the nuclear industry today--circumferential cracking of nuclear steam generator tubes. You also requested that the NRC require that Prairie Island Units 1 and 2 be placed in mid-cycle outages to inspect the full length of the steam generator tubes with the Zetec Plus Point Probe and any state-of-the-art eddy-current test capable of finding circumferentially oriented cracking. You stated, too, that if mid-cycle full-length testing is not performed, the NRC should hold an informal public hearing to explain the NRC's position.

Your addendum contained no new information. Circumferential stress-corrosion cracking generally occurs in those regions that experience significant axial stresses. Axial stresses generally arise as a result of variations in tube geometry. Such variations occur at the expansion transition, in dented locations (including dented tube-to-tube support plate intersections), in tubes with small-radius U-bends, and at sleeve joints. As a result, inspection of the free-span portion of the tubes (regions in which no significant axial stresses occur) with the Zetec Plus Point Probe is not necessary to reasonably assure public health and safety. In addition, a number of licensees have performed limited inspections of the freespan portion of tubes using techniques capable of detecting circumferential cracking for other reasons and, to the NRC staff's knowledge, no such cracking has been detected.

The NRC staff's review of the information in the addendum to your Petition has not raised any safety issues warranting immediate action at the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant. Consequently, your request to require that Units 1

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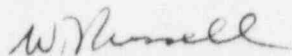
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and 2 be placed in mid-cycle outages to inspect the full length of the steam generator tubes with the Zetec Plus Point Probe and any state-of-the-art test capable of finding circumferentially oriented cracking is denied.

With regard to your request for an informal public hearing, this subject was addressed in an NRC staff letter to you dated July 12, 1995, which denied a similar request on your part. However, it was there noted that the NRC staff would revisit the request at the time of issuance of a Director's Decision. I continue to be of the view that an informal public hearing at this time is not warranted.

As provided by 10 CFR 2.206, the NRC will take appropriate action on your Petition, including the recently filed addenda, within a reasonable time. I have enclosed a copy of the notice that is being filed with the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,



William T. Russell, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-282/50-306

Enclosure: FR Notice

cc w/encl: See next page

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Sincerely,

Original Signed By
WILLIAM T. RUSSELL

William T. Russell, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-282/50-306

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P. Gunter & S. Bjorait

J. E. Silberg, Esq.
Shaw, Pittman, Potts and
Trowbridge
2300 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Plant Manager
Prairie Island Nuclear
Generating Plant
Northern States Power Co.
1717 Wakonade Drive East
Welch, MN 55089

Adonis A. Neblett
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
455 Minnesota Street
Suite 900
St. Paul, MN 55101-2127

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Resident Inspector's Office
1719 Wakonade Drive East
Welch, MN 55089-9642

Regional Administrator, Region III
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
801 Warrenville Road
Lisle, IL 60532-4351

Mr. Jeff Cole, Auditor/Treasurer
Goodhue County Courthouse
Box 408
Red Wing, MN 55066-0408

Site Licensing
Prairie Island Nuclear Generating
Plant
Northern States Power Company
1717 Wakonade Drive East
Welch, MN 55089

Kris Sanda, Commissioner
Department of Public Health
121 Seventh Place East, Ste. 200
St. Paul, MN 55101-2145

Ms. Myrna M. Halbach
Goodhue County
Solid Waste Administrator
P.O. Box 408
Red Wing, MN 55066

Tribal Council
Prairie Island Dakota
Indian Community
5750 Sturgeon Lake Rd.
Welch, MN 55089

Ms. Mary Jo Murray
Minnesota Office of the Attorney
General
525 Park Street
Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55103

Mr. Michael E. McCarthy
Minnesota Dept. of Public Services
121 Seventh Place East
St. Paul, MN 55101-2145

Ms. Gretchen Sable
Minnesota State Planning
300 Centennial Bldg.
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Mr. Richard Duncan
Faegre and Benson Law Firm
2200 Norwest Center
90th South Seventh Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402

City of Red Wing
Council Administrator
Box 34
Red Wing, MN 55066

cc w/encl & incoming:

Mr. Roger O. Anderson, Director
Licensing and Management Issues
Northern States Power Company
414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

March 1995

DISTRIBUTION:

2.206 Acknowledgement to Gunter and Bjoralt Petition
Addendum of 3/13/96

Dated: April 22, 1996

Docket File (50-282,50-306)(w/incoming)
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