



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

MAR 22 1971

Mr. Ralph Nader
1136 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Nader:

This is in reply to your letter of March 1, 1971, concerning low-level flights near nuclear power stations.

The proximity of the Air Force's Bay Shore bomb scoring site to the Big Rock Point plant near Charlevoix, Michigan, and the associated use of the plant in connection with training flights, came to the attention of the AEC in 1963. At that time it was the AEC's understanding that the plant was being used as a practice target and the AEC requested the Department of Defense to remove the plant from the Air Force practice target list. The AEC was then informed by DOD that the plant would not be used by the Air Force for this purpose. We were subsequently informed by DOD that the use of the plant as a practice target had been discontinued, but that low-level flights near the plant continued with the target for these runs being in Lake Michigan, several miles offshore. Subsequent to the January 7, 1971 crash, low-level training flights were suspended and plans are being made to reroute the training flight path away from the plant site.

The Commission's regulatory staff has met with DOD representatives in regard to low-level military flights. The staff is preparing a list of site coordinates for all nuclear power plants for use by the Department of Defense. DOD, in turn, is preparing information on existing low-level flight paths for use by the staff. We plan further discussions on this matter with DOD and believe that a program can be developed, consistent with military requirements, that will avoid low-level flights near these plants.

It is the practice of the AEC regulatory staff to evaluate potential hazards presented by air traffic in the vicinity of airports which may be near a proposed nuclear power plant site before recommending

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approval of the site and plant design. An atomic safety and licensing board reviews these matters in public hearings at which the conclusions of the Commission's regulatory staff and the views of other parties are considered before a decision is made on issuance of a permit to construct a plant.

In the case of the Shoreham Nuclear Power Station, which is about 4-3/4 miles from the Calverton Airport on Long Island, the Commission's regulatory staff concluded that the proposed site is sufficiently far away from the Calverton Airport that the probability of a crash at the site is essentially that associated with general overflights and that the proposed plant need not be designed or operated with special provisions to protect the facility against the effects of an aircraft crash. This conclusion, as well as other matters bearing on plant design and location, is presently being considered by an atomic safety and licensing board. Since the Shoreham proceeding is now in the AEC adjudication process, it would not, of course, be appropriate for me to discuss the merits of any of these points. I am enclosing a copy of the Staff Safety Evaluation for the proposed Shoreham Nuclear Power Station which was filed in that proceeding. Appendix A thereto discusses the matter of proximity of the site to the Calverton Airport.

In another case, that of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Station Units 1 and 2, additional protection against aircraft impact was provided in the design because of the proximity of the plant to Olmstead State Airport (about 2-1/2 miles).

In all cases, during site review meetings, the staff examines the matter of airport proximity to the proposed site. In one case, a utility which had made a tentative selection of a site near an Air Force base elected to change the site location before submitting a formal application.

The Commission's staff has had under development for some time explicit criteria concerning the design and location of nuclear power plants in relation to nearby airports. Factors which are being considered in the development of these criteria include probability of aircraft crashes, potential consequences of such crashes on or near a nuclear power plant, distance and orientation of the nuclear power plant from aircraft runways, type of aircraft using the runways, and frequency of runway use.

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Mr. Ralph Wader

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When completed, these criteria will be published for public comments and we will also send you a copy. Your request for a public hearing on these matters will be considered at that time.

Cordially,

Chairman

Enclosure:
Staff Safety Evaluation
for Shoreham

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