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August 5, 1985

James P. Gleason, Chairman
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board
513 Gilmoure Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Dr. Jerry R. Kline
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Mr. Glenn O. Bright
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Re Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. (Perry Nuclear Power Plant, Units 1 and 2), Docket Nos. 50-440 and 50-441

Gentlemen:

During the April 30-May 3 hearing, there was considerable testimony on drywell integrity and drywell bypass leakage. For your information, intervenor Ohio Citizens for Responsible Energy ("OCRE") has attached a news article concerning the unsuccessful Perry drywell structural integrity test.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Hiatt

Susan L. Hiatt
OCRE Representative
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Enclosure: as stated
cc: Service List

D503

Equipment failure pushes Perry plant back

By Bill Sammon
News-Herald Staff Writer

Completion of the North Perry Village nuclear power plant will be delayed by yet another week because equipment failed during a "major" pre-operational test last week, a federal inspector said.

That means nuclear fuel will not be loaded into the first of two nuclear reactors at the plant until at least the first week of October, said John Grobe, a Perry resident inspector from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Previously, the most recent fuel-load estimate had been listed as Sept. 26 by the plant's builder, the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co., Grobe said.

"It is rather significant from a scheduling standpoint — it's a good week delay," Grobe said.

CEI spokeswoman Elizabeth Shaw said she was not sure how the fuel-load date would be affected, but she stressed it is better to discover such problems during testing than during actual operation of the $6.4 billion plant.

"Better now than later," Shaw said. "We expect things like this to happen. When you're doing testing, you're testing to find problems, and when you find problems, you've got to stop and correct them. At this stage of the game the schedule is going to have to remain flexible."

The problem arose when leaks were discovered in a concrete shell around the nuclear reactor. The shell, called a drywell, is supposed to remain airtight at a pressure of 30 pounds per square inch, Grobe said.

However, during testing, air leaked out seven times before the pressure even reached 13 pounds, Grobe said. The leaks occurred last Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, when CEI decided to abort the test, Grobe said.

The leaks, which are currently being repaired, are significant because the drywell is supposed to lock in radioactive steam in the event of an accident in which coolant might be lost from the reactor. If the leaks were to remain uncorrected, such an accident could result in the release of radiation into the large building which houses the reactor. Other safety systems would presumably stop the radiation from actually leaving the building.

"But you're getting closer and closer to the public," Grobe said. "You're gradually cutting away your defense-in-depth concept."

The leaks could also cause an overpressurization of the reactor building, causing a "crack" or "break" in the building itself, Grobe said.

The leaks occurred in seals around pipes which penetrate the drywell. Each seal consists of a laminated fabric boot which is attached to the inside of the drywell and the outside of piping for safety-release steam valves. The fabric tore when pressure reached levels as low as 7½ pounds per square inch, Grobe said.

The faulty type of boot, which is used to seal 16 pipes in the drywell, is being redesigned to be more airtight, Grobe said.

CEI and the NRC differ on when the plant will begin to generate electricity. CEI says it will happen by the end of the year, but the NRC says it will not happen until next year, possibly as late as March.