

June 17, 1997

EA 97-280

S. K. Gambhir, Division Manager
Production Engineering
Omaha Public Power District
Fort Calhoun Station FC-2-4 Adm.
P.O. Box 399
Hwy. 75 - North of Fort Calhoun
Fort Calhoun, Nebraska 68023-0399

SUBJECT: NRC INSPECTION REPORT 50-285/97-09

Dear Mr. Gambhir:

An NRC inspection was conducted April 23 through June 10, 1997, at your Fort Calhoun Station reactor facility. The enclosed report presents the scope and results of that inspection.

The inspection focused on the causes, circumstances, and corrective actions associated with the April 21, 1997, extraction steamline rupture at Fort Calhoun Station. The inspection results indicated that you did not have in place an effective program for monitoring the condition of certain plant piping systems within the scope of 10 CFR 50.65. Consequently, a catastrophic rupture of a large radius elbow in the extraction steam piping occurred, which resulted in a plant transient and significant challenge to the operators. Additionally, this event posed a significant personnel hazard and resulted in a reduction in the station fire protection capabilities. The NRC views this as a significant event. We are particularly concerned because it is our belief that ample industry-wide operating experience was available to nuclear licensees such that the occurrences of events such as this are avoidable. However, the overall operator response to this event was identified as a strength.

Based on the results of this inspection, one apparent violation was identified and is being considered for escalated enforcement action in accordance with the "General Statement of Policy and Procedure for NRC Enforcement Actions" (Enforcement Policy), NUREG-1600. Accordingly, no Notice of Violation is presently being issued for this inspection finding. In addition, please be advised that the number and characterization of apparent violations described in the enclosed inspection report may change as a result of further NRC review.

Members of our staff have been in contact with you, in order, to schedule a predecisional enforcement conference to discuss this apparent violation. The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. This conference is being held to obtain information to enable the NRC to make an enforcement decision, such as a common understanding of the facts, root causes, missed opportunities to identify the apparent violation sooner, corrective actions, significance of the issues and the need for lasting and effective corrective action. In addition, this is an opportunity for you to point out any errors in our inspection report and for you to provide any information concerning

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your perspectives on 1) the severity of the violation, 2) the application of the factors that the NRC considers when it determines the amount of a civil penalty that may be assessed in accordance with Section VI.B.2 of the Enforcement Policy, and 3) any other application of the Enforcement Policy to this case, including the exercise of discretion in accordance with Section VII. In particular, for this case, your views on the programmatic nature of the erosion/corrosion deficiencies and the extent to which the event complicated recovery from the transient, would be important. This conference will be open to public observation in accordance with a recent change to the enforcement policy (61 FR 65088).

You will be advised by separate correspondence of the results of our deliberations on this matter. No response regarding the apparent violation is required at this time.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter and its enclosure will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room (PDR).

Should you have any questions concerning this inspection, we will be pleased to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

DDC for

Arthur T. Howell III, Director
Division of Reactor Safety

Docket No.: 50-285
License No.: DPR-40

Enclosures:
NRC Inspection Report
50-285/97-09

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