



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

August 1, 1997

The Honorable Jerry Kleczka
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kleczka:

I am responding to your letter dated July 17, 1997, expressing your concerns regarding the impact that the shut down of Point Beach Nuclear Plant (Point Beach) is having on the low electricity supplies in Wisconsin and the effect this condition is having on companies and vulnerable populations at risk from heat-related health problems. Your letter requested that we outline the problems at Point Beach, when it is scheduled to restart, what resources are being expended by the NRC to help Point Beach meet the federal regulations, and whether additional resources are necessary to speed up this process.

The NRC began to identify safety concerns at Point Beach in mid-1996. NRC inspection findings included examples of weaknesses in the conduct of control room activities, loss of control of equipment, and equipment testing problems. During subsequent NRC inspections, findings indicated that Point Beach also had numerous examples of deficiencies in its corrective action program, implementation of certain operating procedures, and resolution of some facility design problems. As a result, Point Beach initiated comprehensive actions to assess past plant performance. Unit 2 was shut down in October 1996 to conduct a scheduled refueling outage and to replace the steam generators (a major activity). Point Beach management voluntarily committed to keep Unit 2 shut down until the improvement initiatives were completed. In February 1997, Point Beach shut down Unit 1 to repair two cooling water pumps. To better focus resources to address the performance issues and the restart of Unit 2, Point Beach management decided to keep Unit 1 shut down.

The NRC developed an Agency Oversight Review Plan and established an Agency Review Panel comprised of staff and senior NRC managers dedicated to closely monitor Point Beach improvements. Several routine, special, and team inspections were performed to assess Point Beach performance and a number of public meetings were conducted to discuss the licensee's progress. As a result of NRC intervention and efforts by the plant staff, Point Beach has made satisfactory progress on improvement initiatives for Unit 2 and is currently preparing to restart that unit. During the week of July 20, in preparation to commence plant startup, equipment problems were encountered. Efforts to correct the issues are ongoing and the licensee expects to restart during the month of August. Unit 1 is expected to restart after Unit 2.

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PDR COMMS NRCC
CORRESPONDENCE PDR



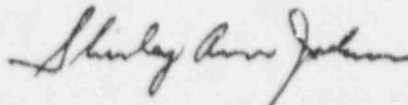
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As stated in your letter, the NRC has seen improvements in a number of important areas at Point Beach, including the ability to find and fix identified problems without NRC intervention. Although the NRC expects an orderly restart of both units and continued improvement in performance, appropriate NRC resources will be committed to closely monitor Point Beach performance.

I trust this information is responsive to your questions. If I can be of further assistance, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shirley Ann Jackson".

Shirley Ann Jackson