

From: [Ace Hoffman](#)
To: [Marlayna Doell](#)
Subject: [External_Sender] Resubmitting: Holtec misuses its RFOL as an excuse to rush Palisades restart (after hiding problems as long as possible)
Date: Thursday, October 8, 2026 2:53:19 PM

To Marlayna Doell, Project Manager, Operating Radiation Licensing Branch 3

Marlayna.Doell@nrc.gov

Re: <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2627/ML26275A214.pdf> and
<https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2627/ML26273A469.pdf>

October 7, 2026

Dear Ms Doell,

I am resubmitting this comment on these two MLs to correct one word to a short phrase in the 18th paragraph, and thereby changing the phrase "all assemblies" to "all fuel rods in that assembly (DD41)", which is what I understand Holtec considers a possible "worst case scenario."

My apologies for mistyping my thoughts the first time. I believe I had read their description correctly yesterday, but did not describe it correctly in my submission, which I reread this morning.

Thank you in advance for accepting this corrected version to replace the previous submission.

Ace Hoffman, Carlsbad, California USA

Holtec is attempting to use the existence of a RFOL (Renewed Facility Operating License) for the as-yet-still-retired Palisades Nuclear Power Plant in Michigan as an excuse to seek and obtain a waiver for the normal procedures following an accident with significant (or potentially significant) consequences. Instead, they want to have an "emergency" bypass of environmental reviews, safety reviews, cost analysis, and every normal post-accident procedure (including a complete and public analysis of why the accident happened in the first place).

The excuse for invoking an "emergency" waiver thanks to the RFOL is that they had planned to restart by early 2027, and there's no way they can make that deadline if they follow proper procedures. Their investors can see that. The NRC can see that. Even the public can see that, even though we haven't been allowed to see the pictures of the accident where a fuel assembly tilted 30 degrees and is damaged and leaning against the inside of the reactor pressure vessel, under at least 10 feet of water.

The accident (or incident, if you prefer to minimize it) occurred about three weeks ago, but the public only learned about it from a series of Reddit posts someone forwarded to nuclear expert Ed Lyman a few days ago. And suddenly Holtec wants a emergency waiver to repair an accident they wouldn't even admit happened? Something's fishy right there!

Holtec was putting the hottest, most radioactive fuel assemblies back in the reactor -- the ones that were in the reactor when it shut down for "good" (and I do mean good).

If the damaged fuel assembly is stable (as Holtec claims), there is no cause for alarm, and this is NOT an "emergency."

This misuse of "emergency" is made clear in section 2.4 of Holtec's application, which quotes 10 CFR 50.91(a)(5), in which the NRC refers to "emergency situations" as those in which failure to act in a timely way would result in derating or shutdown of a nuclear power plant, or in prevention of either resumption of operation or of increase in power output up to the plant's licensed power level.

This situation is NONE OF THOSE. There is many a slip twixt an August 2026 mistake and a planned and replanned restart now slated for "early 2027" at the earliest. There is NO sure restart date, and Holtec is misusing this option in order to move the damaged fuel assembly to the spent fuel pool "... utilizing different plant equipment and following a different travel path ...". In other words, untested equipment and an untested procedure. They need to be careful, not quick.

Palisades was supposed to close permanently in 2031 but it was old, relatively low-power, unreliable, expensive to operate, and not very profitable. Solar, wind, battery backup, and other renewable energy options were blowing it out of the water price-wise, and that problem continued to get worse when they decided to close early, after failing to get what would have been enormously wasteful public financing.

Holtec bought Palisades from Entergy, supposedly to decommission it until there's nothing left but the worst part: The Spent Fuel. They would profit from this operation by draining the decommissioning fund. But at the end, millions of pounds of spent fuel would still be left, sitting on-site in a pile that grew every day the plant was operating (and will only grow larger if Palisades ever operates again, because there is still no solution for the impossible problem of nuclear waste). All the waste will always be there, at least for the lifespan of most or even everyone alive today.

Holtec transferred all the old fuel out of the reactor, and they began demolishing the reactor — starting with reducing staff, and ending all maintenance procedures.

And they destroyed all the records of production: So now it's unknown what parts tended to fail early, what had been replaced recently... who would need any of that after the plant was permanently closed, right?

Well, wrong on two counts, the first one being obvious in this case: They now plan to reopen the plant but don't have any idea of what's likely to happen, and what was done about it previously, what wiring is the oldest, what was replaced a decade ago, two decades ago, etc..

It's all guesswork now.

The second problem with not having proper records has to do with other, similar reactors (but see note, below). While no two reactors are

identical, problems do tend to follow patterns that are easily detectable if enough data is available. As nuclear reactor operators attempt to move to AI-operated reactor systems, prior histories of accidents, incidents, preventive measures and so on become the "training data" for the AI program. But Holtec destroyed all that already. There are numerous parts in any nuclear reactor that should have had special cleaning if the plan was to restart after a long shut-down. This is actually standard-procedure in the industry during long outages — but if the plan is to never re-open the reactor, it's a waste of time and money. Holtec NEVER wants to waste time OR money!

This emergency waiver should be denied. Holtec is NOT in any sort of "emergency" to get Palisades operating. Rather, restarting a reactor that was never supposed to be restarted is invariably a delicate and risky process that must be done carefully, and not rushed. In fact, it's NEVER been done before! Furthermore, Holtec has never operated a reactor, never started one, and had already encountered numerous problems in this risky, foolishly-attempted restart. It's also had a lot of employee turnover.

Neither Holtec nor the NRC has determined, as far as the public can tell, how the accident came about. Is the reactor base faulty or damaged? Was a bolt or a wrench left and NOT NOTICED before trying to place the fuel assembly on top of it, causing the leaning? How did it happen?

What procedural, staff, training, and recording procedures failed — including failing to inform the public (and Holtec's investors) about the event in any kind of timely manner (and pictures have still not been released)?

Furthermore, and most importantly, the chance that a "significant" incident occurs during the proposed action is dismissed by Holtec through a series of convenient assumptions. First, the worst-case scenario at the most risky step was defined as a dropped fuel assembly causing significant damage to all [fuel rods in that assembly], releasing all the toxic (radioactive) isotopes currently held between the fuel pellets and the fuel rods. Therefore, according to Holtec's reasoning -- the current scenario is accepted as being no worse than the worst-case fuel assembly drop accident normally considered.

Given that that MIGHT be true, it IGNORES the fact that such an accident would be extremely expensive, time-consuming, business-crushing, and would hardly be HEALTHY for the public, even if the actual harm was minimal because the radiation dose to the public was reduced by HEPA filters and physical barriers, or sent up the stack to be dispersed by the winds.

The effect of the pressure to rush because HOLTEC considers this repair to be an "emergency" can only increase the risk of a "worst-case scenario" which is precisely why the request should be denied. The only emergency is that in the time it will take to properly correct this problem and restart the reactor, its entire output could have been replaced with solar/wind/battery systems at ZERO risk of "worst-case" accidents needing Price-Anderson, or HEPA filters to protect the public and the workers. There are far more and better jobs in the clean-energy industry, where accidents risking spent nuclear fuel are impossible.

Notably, Holtec's request for an "emergency" waiver and lack of openness smacks of wanting to cover up the true extent of the problem. Holtec is NOT qualified to make the request, NOT qualified to restart Palisades, not qualified to operate Palisades if they ever do get it restarted, and definitely not qualified to supply reliable reports to the public or to the NRC.

The only reason Holtec has stated for requesting an emergency change is that " ... a delay in approval of the proposed changes would result in a delay in the resumption of activities necessary to reach the plant conditions required to restore the plant to power operation." Holtec is claiming that the tilted spent fuel assembly poses no safety hazard so the delay would only cause a financial loss. Again, not a cause for alarm and certainly NOT an "emergency."

Ace Hoffman, Carlsbad, California USA

The author has studied nuclear reactor operations for more than 50 years as an independent researcher.

Note: Even two reactor units built at the same time right next to each other are invariably significantly different: For example, in one case the Reactor Pressure Vessel of one of a pair of reactors was installed backwards (turned 180 degrees) because the crane operators apparently thought it was going to be just like the other one, but it was a mirror image. This is the same industry that is now promoting "modular" reactors as being basically off an assembly line — and Holtec is concurrently planning to install "small modular reactors" at the Palisades site.

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