

November 2, 1999

Mr. Robert G. Byram
Senior Vice President - Nuclear
PP&L, INC
Susquehanna Steam Electric Station
2 North Ninth Street
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18101

SUBJECT: OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS (OI) REPORT NO. 1-1998-016
(DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) CASE NOS. 1999-ERA-2 and 1999-ERA-23)

Dear Mr. Byram:

In our letter dated May 24, 1999, we provided the results of an investigation conducted by the NRC's Office of Investigations (OI) to determine if a former PP&L engineering department manager was terminated from his employment at the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station for raising safety concerns. The OI investigation did not substantiate that the termination was the result of the individual having raised safety concerns while a PP&L employee. However, since a Department of Labor (DOL) Administrative Law Judge decision was pending on the discrimination complaint, we indicated that we would decide on NRC enforcement action after the DOL decision had been issued. On August 30, 1999, the DOL Administrative Law Judge issued an order approving a settlement agreement between the former PP&L employee and PP&L. The NRC has reviewed the results of the OI investigation and the DOL proceedings. Based on this review, the NRC was unable to substantiate that discrimination occurred, and, therefore, no enforcement action is warranted.

As we advised you in our May 24, 1999 letter, a perception may have existed that station management was not receptive to being questioned in an open forum. While the weight of the testimony gathered by OI during their investigation indicated that recognized safety issues were aggressively pursued by station management and that PP&L is trying to address past communication problems and questions about the facility work environment, we expressed concerns that any perceived barriers needed to be addressed. More generally, over the past several years, we have had a number of discussions about the safety conscious work environment (SCWE) at SSES. This included discussions during a management meeting on March 26, 1998, and Region I management site visits in July and October of 1997, and July of 1998. At our meeting with you on July 14, 1999, to discuss the results of our Plant Performance Review, you described current initiatives aimed at improving the SCWE at SSES through improved communications and training. You also described your continued use of periodic surveys to assess progress. Given the importance of this matter, we will continue to monitor your ongoing efforts in this area through review of day to day activities by the resident inspectors and other routine inspections.

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IE14

Mr. Robert G. Byram

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If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Mr. Curtis Cowgill at (610) 337-5233.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:

A. Randolph Blough, Director
Division of Reactor Projects

Docket Nos. 50-387; 50-388

Mr. Robert G. Byram

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