



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 9, 1999

Mr. J. A. Scalice
Chief Nuclear Officer and
Executive Vice President
Tennessee Valley Authority
6A Lookout Place
1101 Market Street
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SUBJECT: SEQUOYAH NUCLEAR PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2 - REJECTION OF LICENSE AMENDMENT REQUEST REGARDING ICE CONDENSER BASKET WEIGHING (TAC NOS. MA6065 AND MA6066) (TS 99-05) AND STANDARD TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION CHANGE TRAVELER 335

Dear Mr. Scalice:

In a letter to Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) Director, James W. Davis, dated October 2, 1998, Dr. William Beckner, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), outlined a number of issues with the current technical specification (TS) surveillance requirements for ice condensers. Most significant were issues regarding the ice basket weighing surveillance. In response, the Westinghouse Ice Condenser Mini Group (ICMG) proposed generic changes to this surveillance requirement. The ICMG submitted this proposal through the NEI technical specifications task force (TSTF) as TSTF-335 in a letter dated June 23, 1999. Concurrent with this generic proposal, on June 24, 1999, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposed plant-specific TSs for Sequoyah Nuclear Plant (SQN) as the lead plant to implement the generic proposal. In an August 11, 1999, meeting between the ICMG and the NRC staff, it was agreed to use the lead-plant review process for SQN to resolve questions about the proposed generic changes.

The NRC staff has reviewed TSTF-335, SQN's corresponding lead-plant amendment request, and related correspondence between TVA and the staff. We have concluded that neither the TSTF-335 application nor the associated SQN lead-plant amendment application adequately addresses the most significant issues with the current TSs. First, they fail to address how to relate the TS ice basket weight sample selection criteria to the required 95% confidence level in the total ice inventory when many ice baskets are frozen in place, such as the situation that presently exists at Sequoyah. Secondly, the current TS surveillance requirements allowance to weigh alternate baskets when unweighable (i.e., frozen in place) baskets are encountered has had an unintended effect, in that TVA's ice basket maintenance practice of thermal drilling in combination with this provision has resulted in nearly half the baskets in the SQN ice beds being unweighable. To compensate, during recent refueling outages, SQN has weighed essentially all free baskets and a small number of stuck baskets freed during the outage. Both the generic and plant-specific TS proposals appear to place continued reliance on such compensatory measures to demonstrate compliance. The staff does not consider this a desirable method for demonstrating compliance with the current TS nor an acceptable long-term method for ensuring an adequate inventory and distribution of ice in the ice basket. Since both proposals fail to address the significant issues adequately, the staff does not plan to approve them as submitted.

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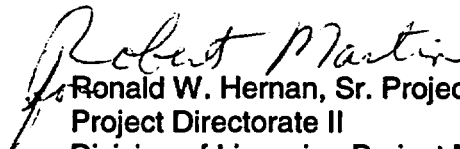
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- 2 -

We suggest a meeting between the NRC staff and the ICMG to discuss proposed revisions to the submittals to deal with these issues. Please contact me at (301) 415-2010 or Mr. Robert Martin, the staff's point of contact for the ICMG, at (301) 415-1493 if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,



Ronald W. Hernan, Sr. Project Manager, Section 2
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December 9, 1999

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