

File On
50-266



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

April 30, 1997

The Honorable Russell D. Feingold
United States Senator
517 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Room 408
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Senator Feingold:

In response to your letter of April 2, 1997, the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) project manager for the Point Beach Nuclear Plant, Ms. Linda Gundrum, contacted your office. With the agreement of your staff, she subsequently contacted Mrs. Winifred Spring. Mrs. Spring had written to you after she received a letter dated January 31, 1997, from Wisconsin Electric Power Company (WEPCO) that notified its customers of its plans for addressing the declining performance trend the NRC had noted at Point Beach. Mrs. Spring was concerned that the plant was not well run, as evidenced by several newspaper articles she enclosed; that the dry casks storing fuel could be attacked by vandals; that issues concerning long-term storage of the radioactive waste were not decided; and that WEPCO was not actively involved with alternate energy sources.

Ms. Gundrum informed Mrs. Spring of the security provisions involved in dry cask storage, and Mrs. Spring seemed satisfied on this issue. Ms. Gundrum also informed Mrs. Spring that the provisions for handling long-term storage of radioactive waste are currently being considered by Congress and that the Point Beach independent spent fuel storage facility was safe.

The need to plan for use of alternate energy sources is not within the purview of the NRC. Mrs. Spring thought that as a Government agency, NRC should require such planning. Ms. Gundrum pointed out that the Department of Energy is more actively involved in establishing the Nation's goals for diverse electrical power sources.

Mrs. Spring also raised the possibility of holding meetings between WEPCO and NRC so that interested individuals could ask questions regarding WEPCO's performance at Point Beach. Ms. Gundrum informed her that as part of the NRC's oversight, we have conducted a number of public meetings with Point Beach, alternating between meetings near the site and at the NRC regional office in Lisle, Illinois. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the progress WEPCO is making toward improving performance at Point Beach. These meetings have been conducted approximately every other week and have been attended by a number of local residents. Mrs. Spring was aware of the public meeting held last week in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, but was unable to attend. No items were left open at the end of the call.

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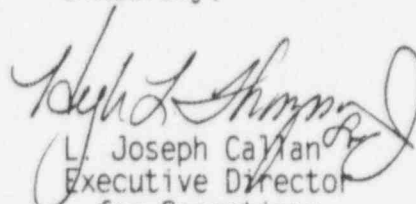
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The Honorable Russell D. Feingold - 2 -

The NRC is confident that the health and safety of the public is not compromised by the Point Beach plant even though the NRC staff has identified weakness in the performance of the plant. A number of significant safety issues were identified in 1996 at Point Beach. On the basis of the declining performance trend at Point Beach during 1996 and the consequences of further decline, NRC senior management issued a letter to the licensee for Point Beach that requested the plant to take action to address the negative performance trend. Additionally, the NRC established a dedicated oversight team to closely monitor the licensee's improvement efforts. In response to NRC concerns, the licensee committed to a large number of significant corrective actions to address identified issues and to assess performance in all areas before restart of Unit 2, which had been shut down for refueling and steam generator replacement. In addition, the licensee voluntarily shut down Unit 1 to focus on addressing performance issues and restarting Unit 2.

Over the last 4 months the licensee has acknowledged many performance weaknesses and has committed substantial resources to addressing these safety issues. We have recently seen improvements in a number of areas and will continue to closely monitor the licensee's progress as the plant moves to restart both units in the future. If your staff has additional questions, they may contact Ms. Gundrum at (301) 415-1380.

Sincerely,


L. Joseph Callan
Executive Director
for Operations

The Honorable Russell D. Feingold - 2 -

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Sincerely,

Original Signed by
Hugh L. Thompson, Jr. *for*

L. Joseph Callan
Executive Director
for Operations

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Executive Director
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DATE	4/25/97		4/24/97		4/22/97	4/25/97

OFFICE	*D:DRPW	E	*ADPR:NRR	E	*D:NRR	EDO	OCA
NAME	JRoe		RZimmerman		SCollins	LCallan	DRathburn
DATE	4/24/97		4/24/97		4/24/97	4/29/97	4/30/97

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Distribution for Ltr to Senator Feingold dated:

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A. Beach, RIII

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L. Gundrum w/incoming

C. Jamerson

J. McCormick-Barger, Region III

Mrs. Spring also raised the possibility of holding meetings between WEPCO and NRC so that interested individuals could ask questions regarding WEPCO's performance at Point Beach. Ms. Gundrum informed her that as part of the NRC's oversight, we have conducted a number of public meetings with Point Beach, alternating between meetings near the site and at the NRC regional office in Lisle, Illinois. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the progress WEPCO is making toward improving performance at Point Beach. These meetings have been conducted approximately every other week and have been attended by a number of local residents. Mrs. Spring was aware of the public meeting held last week in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, but was unable to attend. No items were left open at the end of the call.

A number of significant safety issues were identified in 1996 at Point Beach. On the basis of the declining performance trend at Point Beach during 1996 and the consequences of further decline, NRC senior management issued a letter to the licensee for Point Beach that requested the plant to take action to address the negative performance trend. Additionally, the NRC established a dedicated oversight team to closely monitor the licensee's improvement efforts. In response to NRC concerns, the licensee committed to a large number of significant corrective actions to address identified issues and to assess performance in all areas before restart of Unit 2, which had been shut down for refueling and steam generator replacement. In addition, the licensee voluntarily shut down Unit 1 to focus on addressing performance issues and restarting Unit 2.

Although the licensee was initially slow to accept and aggressively address performance issues, over the last 4 months the licensee has acknowledged many performance weaknesses and has committed substantial resources to addressing these safety issues. We have recently seen improvements in a number of areas and will continue to closely monitor the licensee's progress as the plant moves to restart both units in the future. If you have additional questions, please contact Ms. Gundrum at (301) 415-1380.

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DATE	4/25/97		4/24/97		4/22/97		4/25/97

OFFICE	D:DRPW	E	*ADPR:NRR	E	D:NRR	EDO	OCA
NAME	JRoe <i>JRoe</i>		RZimmerman		Collins <i>Collins</i>	LCallan	DRathbun
DATE	4/24/97		4/24/97		4/22/97	4/ /97	4/ /97

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A number of significant safety issues were identified in 1996 at Point Beach. Significant further erosion in licensee performance would have resulted in Point Beach being placed on the NRC's "problem plant list". Plants on this list are of the most significant regulatory concern and warrant extremely high levels of NRC and licensee management attention (often for protracted periods of time) in order to bring about necessary major improvements in plant safety performance.

Based upon the declining performance trend at Point Beach during 1996 and the consequences of further decline, NRC senior management issued a letter to Point Beach that requested the plant to take actions to address the negative performance trend -- before performance deteriorated to the level that warranted inclusion of Point Beach on the "problem plant list". Additionally, the NRC established a dedicated oversight team to closely monitor Point Beach's improvement efforts. In response to NRC concerns, Point Beach committed to a large number of significant corrective actions to address identified issues and to assess performance in all areas prior to restart of Unit 2 which had been shutdown for refueling and steam generator replacement. In addition, Point Beach voluntarily shut down Unit 1 to focus on addressing performance issues and restarting Unit 2.

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The Honorable Russell D. Feingold - 2 -

Mrs. Spring also raised the possibility of holding meetings between WEPCO and NRC so that interested individuals could ask questions. Ms. Gundrum informed her that NRC does hold meetings with WEPCO, and the meetings are alternated between the Region III offices and local areas. Mrs. Spring was aware of the public meeting held last week in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, but was unable to attend.

No items were left open at the end of the call. If you have additional questions, please contact Ms. Gundrum at (301) 415-1380.

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TO:

Rathbun, OCA

FOR SIGNATURE OF : ** GRN **

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CONCERNS REGARDING POINT BEACH NUCLEAR PLANT
(Winifred Spring)

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Jordan
Thompson
Norry
Blaha
Burns
Paperiello, NMSS
Beach, RIII

DATE: 04/14/97

ASSIGNED TO: CONTACT:

NRR

Collins

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NRR ROUTING: COLLINS
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ACTION
DUE TO NRR DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
BY *April 22, '97*

