

December 23, 2003

Alex Marion
Director, Engineering
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

SUBJECT: STATUS OF RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
(RAI) REGARDING LICENSE AMENDMENT REQUEST FOR CATAWBA
UNITS 1 AND 2, CONCERNING STEAM GENERATOR TUBE INTEGRITY

Dear Mr. Marion:

On November 24, 2003, I received a telephone call from Michael S. Tuckman, Duke Energy Corporation, regarding Duke's technical specification (TS) amendment request for Catawba Units 1 and 2, concerning steam generator (SG) tube integrity. Specifically, Mr. Tuckman gave me an update on the status of Duke's efforts to respond to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's RAI dated September 17, 2003, concerning safety factors to be included in the performance criteria for structural integrity. Mr. Tuckman stated that the industry, through NEI, is conducting a safety factor impact study, the results of which are necessary before Duke can respond to the RAI. Mr. Tuckman stated that industry expects to be ready to meet with the staff in January 2004 to present the results of the safety factor impact study. In addition, at the January 2004 meeting, Duke will discuss the status of its efforts to respond to the RAI, its schedule for submitting the response, and any potential revisions to its proposed performance criteria for structural integrity (relative to the proposed criteria in its letter dated July 30, 2003, ADAMS Accession No. ML032180630).

The Catawba amendment package is the culmination of years of work by industry and the NRC to develop revised TSs which should more effectively ensure SG tube integrity while at the same time providing licensees with flexibility to effectively manage the SGs. Because of these important benefits, the NRC staff is committed to applying the resources needed to complete their review at the earliest time possible. However, the staff cannot complete its review and approval of the Catawba amendment request until the industry submits an acceptable response to the staff's RAI. It is our expectation that the industry and Duke presentations at the January 2004 meeting will provide: (1) a clear indication that resolution of technical issues related to the RAI is imminent; and (2) the schedule for submitting the RAI response and changes to the technical specification amendment request.

Joe Birmingham (301) 415-2829 of my staff is the appropriate point of contact for setting up the January 2004 meeting.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Brian W. Sheron, Associate Director
for Project Licensing and Technical Analysis
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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