

August 3, 2012

The Honorable Tim Scott  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Scott:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your July 11, 2012, letter raising a constituent safety concern regarding Vogtle Electric Generating Plant. The specific concern cited is the ability of the plant to provide core cooling if offsite power is lost due to tropical force winds.

Each of the two reactor units at Vogtle has two standby diesel generators that provide emergency power to each of the two safety feature electrical buses (which, in turn, distribute power to various facility components). Should offsite power be lost, either generator at each unit and its associated bus has the capacity to power the equipment required to safely remove decay heat to place the reactor in a stable, cold shutdown plant condition. Fuel stored onsite is sufficient to operate the diesel generators for seven days without replenishment. Power from back-up batteries at the plant will automatically engage the generators and ensure a constant supply of power to vital instruments and controls.

NRC regulations also address the issue of "station blackout" (SBO), where both offsite alternating current (AC) power and onsite emergency AC power (diesel generators) are lost. In developing this regulatory provision, the agency specifically considered the issue of high winds. The NRC requires that each nuclear power plant be able to cool the reactor core and maintain containment integrity for a specified duration (typically four to eight hours) using back-up batteries and related support systems.

Following the events at the Fukushima Dai-ichi facility in Japan as a result of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the NRC determined that SBO requirements for U.S. commercial nuclear power plants should be further strengthened. Specifically, as directed by the Commission, the staff plans to modify the SBO rule to require enhanced capability to mitigate a prolonged SBO. On March 20, 2012, the agency published in the *Federal Register* an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to gather external stakeholder input and public comments early on in the regulatory development process. The results of this ANPR will be incorporated into the regulatory basis and proposed rulemaking activities.

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Through these current requirements and planned activity to further strengthen plants, the NRC believes that this issue is being fully addressed and that public health and safety are being adequately protected. If you have any questions, please contact me or Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

***/RA by Michael R. Johnson for/***

R.W. Borchardt  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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**/RA by Michael R. Johnson for/**

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