

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 28, 1989

Mr. Carlton Kammerer, Director
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Congressional Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Kammerer:

Enclosed is a letter from Ms. Eva Siegel, who has concerns regarding the Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant.

I would appreciate your reviewing this situation and providing me with your comments. Please send your response to my state office: Post Office Box 3050, Tallahassee, Florida 32315, Attention: Mrs. Becky Liner.

I am grateful for your cooperation and assistance. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,



United States Senator

BG/bsl

Enclosure

The Hon. Bob Graham

3/19/89

Dear Senator Graham -

As my representative, will you please look into this matter and see that we get a hearing.

It is my life that is at stake!

Why does the Nuclear Regulatory Commission allow this to go on and on?

Please give this your immediate attention. Thank you.

Eva Siegel
9305 S.W. 77th Avenue, #436
Miami, FL 33156

Sincerely yours,
Eva Siegel



100

CENTER FOR NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY

7210 Red Road • Suite 217 • Miami, Florida 33143 • 661-2165

March 1989

Dear Friend of the Florida Environment,

On March 21, 1989, three Judges from the ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD of the U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION will be in Miami to consider whether or not a request for a PUBLIC HEARING initiated by the CENTER FOR NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY concerning safety issues at the Turkey Point Nuclear plant should be granted.


The prehearing ORAL ARGUMENT will take place at the U.S. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE (OLD BUILDING), 300 NE FIRST AVENUE, ROOM 4, at 9 A.M. The issues that will be debated by FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT and the CENTER involve an FPL request for an amendment to the operating licenses for Turkey Point nuclear units #3 and #4. The Center has reason to believe, after consulting scientific experts, that the requested amendments could make the severely embrittled Turkey Point reactor pressure vessels more susceptible to cracks, which could cause a loss of the reactors cooling water and result in a meltdown of the reactor core. A meltdown at Turkey Point could kill and injure hundreds of thousands of people in the South Florida area. Dr. George Sih, Director of Fracture Mechanics at Lehigh University, who studies how metals break, has assured us that our concerns are valid. Should the Licensing Board grant us a hearing, we hope to have Dr. Sih as our technical expert.

It is extremely important that members of this community attend the Oral Argument on March 21st so that the Licensing Board will see that there is widespread concern about Turkey Point in our community. If they do not see that we are concerned, they could easily deny the Center's request for a hearing. We are currently in the process of requesting the Licensing Board to allow brief public statements at the prehearing.

PLEASE, if you are able to attend on MARCH 21, 1989. do so. Your attendance could mean the difference between a full public hearing on critical safety issues at Turkey Point or no hearing at all.

As you probably know, Turkey Point has been rated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as one of the ten worst nuclear plants in the United States. Additionally, as Turkey Point ages, the metal in the pressure vessel welds becomes more brittle and increases the chances of a worst case accident taking place at the plant. Our only insurance against a major accident at this problem plagued plant is education and public participation. PLEASE ATTEND THIS PREHEARING OR IF YOU CAN'T, WRITE TO DR. PAUL COTTER, ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD, U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555, AND TELL HIM THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE A FULL PUBLIC HEARING ON SAFETY PROBLEMS AT THE TURKEY POINT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS.

Sincerely,



Joette Lorion

INVOLVEMENT • LITIGATION • NUCLEAR INFORMATION



CENTER FOR NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY

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THE TURKEY POINT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS: HOW UNSAFE IS UNSAFE ENOUGH?

The Turkey Point nuclear power reactors, located only 25 miles from Miami, have the dubious distinction of being the "most fined" operating nuclear power plants in the entire United States. Fines levied against Florida Power and Light Company (FPL) by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for violations of NRC safety regulations have now surpassed the million dollar mark.

Additionally, Miami's backyard nuclear plants have been named among the "ten worst" nuclear plants in the country both by an NRC Commissioner in a statement before Congress in 1986 and also by Ralph Nader's Public Citizen Organization in April 1988.

Yet, despite the fact that by the NRC's and FPL's own admissions Turkey Point is suffering from numerous management, maintenance, quality control, and equipment problems, these problem plagued nuclear reactors continue to operate. WHY?

TURKEY POINT CHRONOLOGY

1971 and 1972: Turkey Point nuclear units #3 and #4 begin commercial operation. Both nuclear units combined cost 235 million dollars to build.

1979 through 1981 : The Turkey Point plants begin to suffer from premature aging. The STEAM GENERATORS in both nuclear units become corroded and as the tubes develop more and more leaks, FPL is forced to replace the steam generators with new ones at a cost of over \$500 million dollars to the ratepayers (this figure includes the cost of replacement fuel purchased during the outage).

1981 : The NRC issues a report on PRESSURIZED THERMAL SHOCK. The report lists Turkey Point Units 3 and 4 as having the second and third most brittle reactor pressure vessel welds in the entire United States. Embrittled welds are susceptible to cracking in an accident that requires emergency cooling water be pumped into the reactor core. The result of a brittle fracture would be a core meltdown. The NRC report indicates that the embrittlement process cannot be reversed by known technology, only slowed, so they order FPL to take steps to slow down the metal fatigue process.

1983: The NRC allows FPL to redesign the fuel cores at Turkey Point in an attempt to slow the embrittlement process, attacking the reactor pressure vessel welds. The Pressurized Thermal Shock Report lists the cost of fuel core redesign as 22 million dollars per reactor unit. In addition, the NRC grants FPL license amendments that allow them to relax certain safety margins so that they can continue to operate the degraded reactors at 100% power.

July 13, 1984: The NRC, citing deficiencies in plant operations, maintenance, and training at the Turkey Point plants since 1982, issues an ORDER for FPL to improve performance at the Turkey Point plant. FPL begins their Performance Enhancement Program.

TURKEY POINT NUCLEAR PLANTS

Page 2

March 1986: Nine out of thirteen senior reactor operators at Turkey Point fail their licensing requalification test. NRC reports show that Turkey Point nuclear plant operators only had a 38% pass rate overall. The industry average is 85%.

May 1986: In testimony before Congress, an NRC Commissioner lists Turkey Point among the "ten worst" managed plants in the entire United States.

August 1986: The NRC issues their latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee's Performance (SALP REPORT) for the previous eighteen months. The Turkey Point nuclear reactors get the lowest grade possible in the critical areas of performance, maintenance, quality control, and operator training. The NRC issues a second ORDER for FPL to improve their performance at Turkey Point.

March 1987: Having shut Turkey Point Unit 4 down for an unrelated reason, FPL finds that 550 pounds of corrosive boric acid has concentrated on the head of the reactor pressure vessel. The NRC immediately sends an NRC inspection team to Turkey Point. A subsequent report authored by the NRC provides information that FPL had known about the leak in the primary system since August 1986. Yet the leaking unit was allowed to operate.

April 1987: FPL is fined by the NRC because a security guard is found sleeping on the job. NRC documents demonstrate that this wasn't the first time.

October 1987 : A round-the-clock inspection team is sent to Turkey Point to monitor plant operations after it is reported to the NRC that an unlicensed, unauthorized individual was found operating the controls of the nuclear power plant. NRC issues a third ORDER for FPL to improve their performance at Turkey Point. The NRC also agrees that FPL should conduct an independent management appraisal of Turkey Point and states in a letter that after they review the report the "NRC will determine whether further NRC enforcement action, such as modification or suspension of your operating license is necessary to ensure compliance with NRC regulatory requirements and safe operation of the Turkey Point facility".

May 1988 : A letter from the NRC to FPL indicates that the Turkey Point reactor pressure vessels may not meet the required fracture toughness requirements.

August 16, 1988: 3,200 gallons of radioactive water spill out of the Turkey Point Unit 4 spent fuel pool (high level nuclear waste facility). 2,500 gallons of radioactive water enter the outside environment.

November 1988 : The Center for Nuclear Responsibility requests a public hearing before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board of the NRC on the pressure vessel embrittlement issue. A prehearing conference is scheduled to be held in Miami on March 21, 1989.

December 1988 : Thomas Saporito, control room specialist at the Turkey Point nuclear plant is fired from his job by FPL. Saporito, who claims that he was fired because he reported serious FPL safety violations to the NRC files a WHISTLEBLOWER CLAIM before the U.S. Department of Labor. On January 10, 1989 a DOL Hearing Officer orders that Saporito was discriminated against and rules that he be reinstated by FPL and given back-pay and \$100,000 in compensatory damages. FPL appeals the ruling and requests a full-blown hearing which is held February 1, 2, and 3 in Miami.

Note: As of December 31, 1988, both Turkey Point units are shutdown because of leaks in the primary system.

IF TURKEY POINT IS SO BAD WHY DOESN'T THE NRC SHUT IT DOWN?

Despite the myriad of safety, equipment, and management problems that admittedly exist at the Turkey Point plants the NRC has not shutdown either of these nuclear units for one minute, one hour, one day. Why?

Perhaps the answer can be found in a General Accounting Office Report that was issued in August 1987. The report entitled: "NUCLEAR REGULATION-EFFORTS TO ENSURE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT SAFETY CAN BE STRENGTHENED" points out that although the Atomic Energy Act allows the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to shutdown unsafe nuclear plants, the NRC lacks guidelines to do so. The report also states that in many cases it is the utilities themselves, not the NRC, who have shutdown unsafe or troubled plants. Thus, it appears that there is a serious question as to whether the NRC will take actions necessary to resolve safety problems if it means actually shutting down an unsafe plant.

IS TURKEY POINT UNSAFE ENOUGH?

Very few people would board a 747 with numerous safety, management, and equipment problems and allow the Airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration to correct the problems while in flight. Why then should we allow our backyard nuclear plant to operate with so many admitted safety problems while the NRC continues to attempt to get FPL to improve their performance. (After all, they've only been trying to get FPL to shape up since 1984).

Perhaps the time has come for South Florida residents to ask some hard questions of both the NRC and our governmental representatives concerning the operation of this dangerous instrumentality in our midst. Perhaps the time has come to request that these nuclear plants be shutdown until all the safety, management, and equipment problems have been resolved.

* Supporting documentation for the chronology can be obtained from Joette Lorian of the Center for Nuclear Responsibility, 7210 Red Road #217, Miami, Fl. 33143.

