

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

June 5, 1979

Mr. Joseph M. Hendrie
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

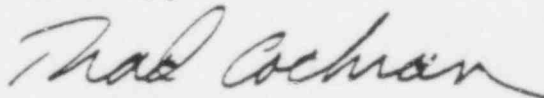
Dear Mr. Hendrie:

Enclosed is a copy of a telegram I received from Mr. Donald Lutken, President of Mississippi Power and Light Company, regarding the impact of any delay in the issuance of an operating license for their nuclear plant at Grand Gulf. Also enclosed is a copy of a statement outlining the safety of the proposed plant.

I would appreciate your full consideration of the issues raised by Mr. Lutken and your providing me with a response to them.

Your assistance is appreciated.

Sincerely,



THAD COCHRAN
U. S. Senator

TC/jlb

Enclosures

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PMS SENATOR THAD COCKRAN

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THIS TELEGRAM INVOLVES A MATTER OF GRAVE URGENCY FOR THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI. THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION IS CONSIDERING A STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO DELAY WORK ON AND SUBSEQUENT ISSUANCE OF THE OPERATING LICENSE FOR GRAND GULF FOR 12 MONTHS; AND LOUISIANA POWER AND LIGHT WATERFORD PLANT FOR 6 MONTHS. THIS DECISION MAY BE MADE FRIDAY MAY 25.

THESE DEFERRALS, IF APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION, WILL COST BLACKOUTS IN THE 3 STATE AREA OF MISSISSIPPI LOUISIANA AND ARKANSAS AS SERVED BY THE MIDDLE SOUTH SYSTEM DURING THE SUMMER LOAD SEASON OF 1981 AND 1982.

THIS WOULD BE A LOSS OF 2360 MEGAWATTS OF BASE LOAD CAPACITY FOR WHICH THERE WOULD BE NO REPLACEMENT AVAILABLE FROM ANY SOURCES NOW KNOWN TO US. THE NRC STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD ALSO DELAY THE LICENSING OF ANY OTHER NUCLEAR PLANTS IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST, WHICH MEANS THERE WILL BE LITTLE, IF ANY, REPLACEMENT ENERGY AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN THIS REGION.

WE ESTIMATE THAT THE LOSS NUCLEAR CAPABILITY AND ENERGY RESULTING FROM SUCH ACTION DURING THE DELAY PERIOD WOULD REQUIRE THE CONSUMPTION OF AN ADDITIONAL 18 MILLION BARRELS OF OIL IF, INDEED, WE HAD THE GENERATING PLANTS TO BURN THE OIL. THE FUEL COST DIFFERENTIAL IN THE TWO YEAR PERIOD 1981 AND 1982 WOULD BE AT LEAST 195 MILLION DOLLARS. HOWEVER IF THE REPLACEMENT ENERGY MUST BE PURCHASED ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS FROM NEIGHBORING UTILITIES THE COST WOULD BE VERY MUCH HIGHER.

THE DELAYS CONTEMPLATED BY NRC WOULD ADD A THIRD OF A BILLION DOLLARS TO THE CONSTRUCTION COST OF THESE TWO MIDDLE SOUTH NUCLEAR PLANTS WHICH WOULD ULTIMATELY BE BORN BY OUR CUSTOMERS.

IN ADDITION, IF THE GRAND GULF NUMBER 1 COMPLETION DATE IS DELAYED BEYOND DECEMBER 1982, THE MIDDLE SOUTH SYSTEM OPERATING COMPANIES (INCLUDING M P & L) ARE OBLIGATED TO PAY AN ADDITIONAL 250 MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR FOR OBLIGATION INCURRED IN FINANCING THE PLANT.

ASIDE FROM THESE DOLLARS FIGURES THE SPECTER OF BLACKING OUT SECTIONS OF THIS FREE STATE AREA AND THE RESULTING ECONOMIC CACS,

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INCIDENT AND THE HEAVY DEMANDS ON THE STAFF TO APPEAR BEFORE
ENDLESS CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, IF NRC IS UNDERSTAFFED TO MEET ITS
WORK LOAD THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM IS NOT A DEFERRAL OF LICENSING,
BUT ADDITION OF SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL TO EXPEDITE RATHER THAN DELAY
THESE BADLY NEEDED PLANTS.

IT IS URGENT THAT YOU INTERCEDE WITH NRC TO AVOID ACTION LACKING IN
THE PROPOSED DELAY AND PROCESSING OF LICENSES AND WITH THE
APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO NRC
SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO ACQUIRE COMPETENT STAFF PERSONNEL TO CARRY OUT
THE RESPONSIBILITIES ASSIGNED TO NRC IN A TIMELY FASHION

DONALD C LUTKEN PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER MISSISSIPPI
POWER AND LIGHT CO PO BOX 1640 JACKSON MS 39205

12:46 EST

MGMCOMP MGM

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"SHORT" STATEMENT ON SAFETY AT GRAND GULF NUCLEAR STATION

Grand Gulf vs. Three Mile Island -

Could a loss of coolant accident such as the March 28, 1979 incident at Three Mile Island occur at Grand Gulf? The answer is "absolutely not." Grand Gulf utilizes a different design concept which precludes an incident such as occurred at Three Mile Island.

Safety Features at Grand Gulf Nuclear Station -

The Grand Gulf Nuclear Station incorporates the most modern and most sophisticated technology in the history of steam generation. It is, in the words of Dr. Teller, infinitely safer than any other method of commercial production of electric energy.

It utilizes a "defense-in-depth" concept so that if a safety system were to malfunction, a series of back-up systems automatically function.

Operator Efficiency and Training -

Each operator is trained to levels of performance higher than Nuclear Regulatory Commission standards. This level of operator proficiency will be maintained by annual simulator tests of every conceivable event that could occur in the Grand Gulf plant.

Security -

Potential threats to the integrity of the plant from outside sources have been fully considered in the design and construction of Grand Gulf. The plant will safely withstand all credible natural phenomena as well as man-made threats. A highly trained, armed guard force using sophisticated intrusion detection systems will prevent sabotage or intrusion.

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Evacuation Plans -

An emergency response plan for Grand Gulf is being prepared together with state and local authorities. This will be reviewed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a condition of the operating license. It will be tested periodically after the plant begins operations.

Disposal of Radioactive Wastes -

Spent fuel discharged from Grand Gulf will be held in storage tanks at the plant until it is received by the Federal Government for reprocessing or disposal. This is in accordance with present Federal law.

Grand Gulf has sufficient spent fuel storage to accommodate plant operation through 1992.

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"LONG" STATEMENT ON SAFETY AT GRAND GULF NUCLEAR STATION

The Grand Gulf Nuclear Station design incorporates the most modern and sophisticated technology available in the power generation industry. This design fully conforms to the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) regulations and criteria and is thoroughly reviewed by the NRC for compliance. The comprehensive quality assurance programs which have been applied to all phases of the design, construction and eventual operation of the plant will assure that it is as safe and efficient as possible.

Nuclear reactors are built utilizing the "defense-in-depth" concept. This means that for each plant system that performs a safety function there are others, back up systems, to take over and perform that function should the primary system malfunction. The redundancy in the safety systems at the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station will assure the protection of the public in the unlikely event of a system malfunction or accident. The recent events at the Three Mile Island plant proved the validity of this concept. In spite of numerous malfunctions the plant was safely shutdown and no one was killed or even injured. Additionally, radiation exposures received by persons in and around the plant, including the public, never even remotely approached dangerous levels.

Persons living in the immediate vicinity of the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station routinely receive approximately 150 millirems of radiation per year from natural background sources - - air, water, food cosmic rays, television, bricks, medical x-rays, etc. A chest x-ray alone exposes a person to 40 millirems. By contrast, the additional radiation that will be received by these people due to the operation of the Grand Gulf plant will be about 1 millirem per year less than 1% of the natural background dose they already receive.

The training and qualification program for the personnel who will operate the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station is extremely rigorous and thorough. The final step in this process is a comprehensive testing program administered and evaluated by the NRC. These operators will undergo a retraining and requalification program each year on a nuclear reactor computer simulator to evaluate their actions under all credible simulated accident conditions. This will assure the maintenance of their knowledge and skills.

Potential threats to the plant's safety integrity from outside sources have been fully considered and accounted for in the design. The plant will safely withstand all credible natural phenomena including severe storms, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods. The tornado that struck in April, 1978 caused damage only because the plant was in a partially completed state. Had the plant been completed and operating, there would have been no damage that could have caused a threat to the public. Man-made threats have also been considered. The plant is to be equipped with sophisticated electronic

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intrusion detection systems, access control and screening systems, and an armed, highly specialized and trained guard force to prevent sabotage or plant takeover.

The safety record of the commercial nuclear power industry is flawless. No one has ever been killed or even injured due to the radiation from these plants. Our technology has taken a potentially hazardous source of energy and controlled it so that it can benefit society. There have been accidents including the recent events at Three Mile Island, but the plants have always performed as intended and minimized risk to mankind. Care in design, construction and operation of these plants has held the consequences of that risk to a fully acceptable level - - zero!

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