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January 28, 1995

Mr. Ivan Selin
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Selin,

In its issue of November 11, 1994 THE BLADE (Toledo newspaper) carried an article entitled "70 nuclear plants on fire watch." This article said that our closest nuclear power plant, Davis Besse, uses Thermal-Lag 330 to wrap certain electrical cables. Our concern is that this material which is used to protect vital electrical cables connected to reactor safety systems to protect from fire, might initiate fires. Our reason for this concern is that the material, Thermal-Lag, when tested by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, failed to meet the minimum fire barrier requirements.

THE BLADE article further informed us that President Rubin Feldman of TSI, Thermal Sciences, Inc. that makes Thermal-Lag, on September 29, 1994 was indicted by a federal grand jury on seven criminal charges, including willful violations of the Atomic Energy Act, a decade-long conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government, false statements, and more. 70 nuclear power plants have spent \$58 million on Thermal-Lag 330 since 1982.

Moreover, the article states that Thermal Sciences, Inc. conspired with ITL-Industrial Testing Laboratories and its President, Allan Siegel, to fake test results and conceal facts from the government. In April, 1994, according to the BLADE article, Siegel and ITL pleaded guilty to five counts of aiding and abetting, and false statements.

Steven West of NRC, following the September indictments, said "We wouldn't object to the continued use of the material. That's a decision the individual utility has to make."

Due to the holidays and other activities we were unable to write you sooner, Mr. Selin, about this alarming matter. We want to know what has been developing in relation to this situation. Has the Thermal-Lag material now been replaced at Davis Besse, with safe, fire-insulating material?

Please read the enclosed BLADE article. We appreciate your attention to this matter. Safety is a great concern to us.

Sincerely,



Alice and Rich Edwards
(Mrs. M. Alice Edwards,
Mr. Richard W. Edwards, JR.)

70 nuclear plants on fire watch

BY TOM HENRY
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Seventy of America's 109 nuclear plants, including Davis-Besse, are vulnerable to disaster because they contain flammable insulation, according to the U.S. Justice Department.

Electrical cables and boxes at those plants are insulated by a product called Thermal-Lag 330, which government officials say is flammable. The manufacturer, Thermal Sciences, Inc., of St. Louis, was indicted Sept. 29, after a two-year grand jury investigation revealed it faked tests and falsified reports that claim the material is fireproof, the Justice Department said.

The company has been selling Thermal-Lag 330 to the nuclear industry since 1982. The 70 plants have spent \$58 million on it.

So far, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has not required nuclear plants to replace the material. Its main action has been a 1992 order that required plants to establish "fire watch patrols" in places where the product had been installed.

Toledo Edison Co. spent \$2 million to get cables and boxes inside its Davis-Besse plant in Ottawa County wrapped with the insulation — \$400,000 on the material, and another \$1.6 million on installation, spokesman Janet Galecki said.

It has no immediate plans to replace faulty insulation.

Detroit Edison Co., which operates Fermi II in Michigan's Monroe County, has spent \$1.2 million during its 11-month shutdown to replace most of the Thermal-Lag 330 in its plant with another material, spokesman Guy Cerullo said.

It had about half as much of the product as Davis-Besse, according to volumes cited by the two utilities.

Fermi II has been out of operation since a fire and explosion at the plant last Christmas. When it goes back on line — most likely later this month — the rest of the material will have been replaced, Mr. Cerullo said.

"We've had the extended outage here, so we've been able to do it," Mr. Cerullo said. "We saw an opportunity and did it."

The \$1.2 million is being taken out of Detroit's Edison capital expenditure budget, an account for large equipment and maintenance expenses. It will not be passed on to ratepayers, Mr. Cerullo said.

Toledo Edison eventually may replace the material. But, barring an immediate NRC order, the utility will continue only with its fire watch patrols, which are done by the plant's security force on an hourly basis, Ms. Galecki said.

It also is performing tests, with other utilities, separate from those done by the government, she said.

"We're still evaluating what the best option is," Ms. Galecki said.

Thermal-Lag 330 was one of several products created in response to stronger fire protection codes the NRC adopted after a 1975 fire at a nuclear plant in Alabama. In that incident, a blaze cut through cables, and the operator temporarily lost control of the reactor, according to the Justice Department.

On Sept. 29, a federal grand jury in Maryland indicted Thermal Science and its president, Rubin Feldman, 69, of Ladue, Mo., on seven counts, including conspiracy, making false statements, and violating the Atomic Energy Act.

After the indictment, U.S. Attorney Lynne Battaglia said "the alleged misconduct in this case represents a contempt for the safety of the American people."

"The NRC's strict standards for

fire barriers in nuclear power plants exist for one reason only — to protect the public from the dangers posed by an out-of-control nuclear reactor," she said.

The case is scheduled to be heard May 23. The indictment was brought in Maryland, where the NRC is based. Attorneys for Thermal Science, however, are arguing to have the case moved to St. Louis.

Besides the product's flammability, there is a dispute over what Thermal-Lag 330 could put into the air if it catches fire.

Environmental activists claim it releases hydrogen cyanide, a poisonous gas, when it ignites. They claim fire watch crews could be killed by the gas if they try to put out flames from the insulation.

Jan Strasma, a spokesman for the NRC's regional office in suburban Chicago, said there is not enough evidence to support those claims.

But, he said: "It's clear the Thermal-Lag, as installed, does not stop fires."

The Maryland indictment claims Thermal Science conspired with a St. Louis laboratory, Industrial Testing Laboratories, Inc., to fake test results, and conceal facts from the government.

In April, Industrial Testing and its president, Allan Siegel, pleaded guilty to five counts of aiding and abetting, and false statements, according to Stuart Berman, an assistant U.S. attorney.

The company, which received \$80,000 from Thermal Science over 10 years, was fined \$150,000, the Justice Department said.

Mr. Siegel's sentencing was delayed until after the Thermal Science trial. As part of a negotiated deal, he is required to cooperate with the government and, if necessary, testify at the trial, Mr. Berman said.

At Davis-Besse, Toledo Edison installed 1,000 feet of the material around cables and conduits. Another 4,000 square feet was wrapped around boxes, Ms. Galecki said.

Detroit Edison installed 2,000 square feet of the material in Fermi II's auxiliary building.

Thermal-Lag 330 is "not in any way the only fire protection system we have," Ms. Galecki said. Wherever there is Thermal-Lag 330, there are automatic and manual sprinklers, she said.

Local and national activists are calling on the government to shut down all nuclear plants that have Thermal-Lag 330 in them until the material is replaced.

They also have leveled criticism at the NRC for failing to act more decisively.

Alice Hirt, spokesman for Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy, said it is unacceptable for the NRC to rely on the fire watch patrol indefinitely.

Paul Gunter, spokesman for the Nuclear Information & Resource Service, a national group based in Washington, said the situation leaves the public more vulnerable to a nuclear accident.

Watchdogs hope to pressure the NRC into taking action, Mr. Gunter said.

The U.S. House Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee, chaired by U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D., Trenton), has questioned the NRC about its response.

Mr. Gunter said the NRC's handling of the affair should draw as much attention as Thermal Science's product.

"Just how strict are the NRC's fire protection codes when plants have been out of compliance for 12 years now?" he asked.