



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

JUL 19 1985

Docket Nos: 50-498
and 50-499

Mr. J. H. Goldberg
Group Vice President, Nuclear
Houston Lighting and Power Company
Post Office Box 1700
Houston, Texas 77001

Dear Mr. Goldberg:

SUBJECT: SOUTH TEXAS PROJECT, UNITS 1 AND 2 - REQUEST FOR
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The staff has become aware of information regarding French operating experience with a nuclear power plant similar to South Texas Project. As a result, it is necessary to obtain answers to the questions listed below following the background information.

Background:

The ACRS recently visited their French counterparts, the Group Permanent-Reacteur, for technical discussions. Included in the program was a tour of the Paluel Nuclear Power Station on Monday, May 20, 1985.

The Paluel Nuclear Power Station is a four-unit 1300 MWe PWR of the P-4 design. This is the current 4-loop design series of reactors being built in France of which there are plans for 22 like-units to be constructed at 11 sites.

The Paluel Station is the first in this series to be constructed and begin operation. Unit 1 and 2 began power generation in 1984, Unit 3 is about to begin initial fueling, and Unit 4 is approximately 60-percent complete. The day of the visit, Unit 1 had been shut down due to a vibration problem; Unit 2 was operating at 80 percent power.

During the technical discussions at the reactor site, the Electricite de France (EdF) staff identified a problem that has developed in Unit 1. It has been discovered that vibration below the fuel assemblies in the lower portion of the reactor vessel is damaging the movable incore instrumentation probe thimbles. EdF believes this unexpected vibration is due to a design change that lengthened the fuel bundle assembly from 12 to 14 feet. This change reduced the void at the bottom of the reactor vessel for the coolant to circulate, thereby creating coolant turbulence. The situation is still being studied, and they did not identify if a fix had been decided on.

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A PDR

NRC staff from the Mechanical Engineering Branch and the Licensing Project Manager were given the opportunity to discuss with Westinghouse during a meeting for South Texas Project on June 26, 1985, the relevance of the French experience. We request you to answer the following questions so that the record can accurately reflect the potential connection between the French experience and the South Texas Project.

Questions:

- (1) Do you attribute the vibrational problems at Paluel Station to the 14 foot core design?
- (2) Do you feel the same vibrational problems are possible at STP? If you do then quantify the safety impact of such a problem. If you do not then explain any design differences between STP and Paluel that lead you to this conclusion.
- (3) In light of the Paluel experience do you still believe that the vessel model flow test data which you submitted in your FSAR is still valid?

Please inform us as to your schedule for responding. Please contact the Project Manager at (301) 492-7272 if you have any questions.

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George W. Knighton, Chief
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cc: See next page

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