



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

November 22, 1996

Mr. Stephen Dwyer
c/o Robert Sanregret, Esq.
17621 Irvine Blvd. #100
Tustin, CA 92780

Dear Mr. Dwyer:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your request, dated September 22, 1996, that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) shut down the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) "as soon as possible" pending a complete review of the "new seismic risk." Since SONGS, Unit 1, was permanently shut down on November 30, 1992, your request will be considered as referencing SONGS, Units 2 and 3. As a basis for this requested relief, you assert that a design criterion for the plants, which was "0.75 G's acceleration," is "fatally flawed" on the basis of the new information gathered at the Landers and Northridge quakes. You assert (1) that the accelerations recorded at Northridge exceeded "1.8 G's and it was only a Richter 7+ quake," (2) that there were horizontal offsets of up to 20 feet in the Landers quake, and (3) that the Northridge fault was a "Blind Thrust and not mapped or assessed."

Your request that the Commission immediately shut down the SONGS units is denied. The ground motion detected at the SONGS site during these two earthquakes was below the 0.05g reporting limit in place at the time of those earthquakes and had no effect on SONGS structures and components. In addition, you have not provided evidence in your request to support your assertion that these two earthquakes have invalidated the seismic design of the SONGS units. The Northridge and Landers earthquakes occurred in areas where the tectonics is different than in the SONGS area. Because of the differences in geology and tectonics between the source regions of the Landers and Northridge earthquakes and the SONGS site area, earthquakes of those types are not contributors to the seismic hazard at the SONGS site and do not contribute to the seismic design criteria for the SONGS units, which are discussed more fully below.

Before licensing SONGS (and all nuclear power plants) the NRC reviewed the design of the facility including its ability to safely withstand the effects of natural phenomena such as earthquakes. The SONGS site had undergone geologic and seismic investigations and review prior to issuance of the construction permits, including surveys performed by the applicant, the United States Geological Survey, the California Division of Mines and Geology, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The findings of these investigations were reviewed extensively by the staff and were litigated extensively in proceedings concerning the issuance of the construction permits and operating licenses for SONGS Units 2 and 3. The seismic design of the plants is based on the assumed occurrence of a magnitude 7 earthquake on the

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November 22, 1996

Offshore Zone of Deformation (OZD), a fault zone approximately 8 kilometers (5 miles) from the site, at its closest approach. This assumed event is larger than earthquakes known to have occurred on the OZD, and the resulting ground motion estimate is larger than that which could reasonably be expected at the plant site from other seismic sources. Southern California Edison (SCE or the licensee) has recently completed a probabilistic seismic hazard assessment which confirms the conservatism of the seismic design of the plant (SCE letter dated December 15, 1995, entitled, "Response to Generic Letter 88-20, Supplement 4, Individual Plant Examination of External Events").

Accordingly, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that there is a substantial public health and safety hazard warranting the immediate action you request. The Commission staff will, however, evaluate the matters that you have alleged.

Your request has been referred to me pursuant to 10 CFR 2.206 of the Commission's regulations. As provided by Section 2.206, action will be taken on your request within a reasonable time. I have enclosed for your information a copy of the notice that is being filed with the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Frank J. Miraglia, Jr., Acting Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: Notice

cc w/encl: See next page

*For previous concurrences see attached ORC

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OFC	PDIV-2/LA	PDIV-2/PM	TECH Editor*	PDIV-2/D	NRR:ECGB*
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Mr. Stephen Dwyer

- 3 -

November 22, 1996

cc w/encl:

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