

Docket No. 50-275
and 50-323

APR 22 1977

The Honorable Gaylord Nelson
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Nelson:

I am pleased to respond to your transmittal dated February 23, 1977, forwarding a letter from Ms. Kathi Schulze of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. Ms. Schulze referred to a recent newspaper article concerning the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant and expressed an opinion that the plant should not be allowed to operate.

The Hosgri fault was discovered in 1971 close to the plant and has been the subject of investigation by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the U. S. Geological Survey and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) since 1973 when PG&E applied for an operating license.

Operation of the plant is being held up, at considerable cost, because the earthquake safety questions are not yet resolved. The first unit at this site was essentially completed early last year. It appears that operation will have been held up about 1 1/2 years before a decision on the operating license can be made.

The plant is located 3 1/2 miles from the Hosgri fault on a foundation of competent rock. What we are dealing with here is a question of redesign and modification to withstand more severe ground shaking than was considered in the original design. However, there is no reason to be concerned about ground rupture at the plant site due to an earthquake. The NRC staff has called for an analysis to determine what changes may be necessary so that the plant can withstand a magnitude 7.5 earthquake on the Hosgri fault. This is a very severe earthquake design basis.

The plant's owner, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, is performing this engineering analysis. Then the matter must be reviewed in turn by the NRC staff and by the independent Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. In the process, it will have been scrutinized by many competent geologists, seismologists and structural engineers, including independent consultants of national stature. Finally, the matter will be considered by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board at a public hearing. It is not known, at this time, what the final decision will be.

B/16

The Honorable Gaylord Nelson

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As you requested, this response is made to you in duplicate and the original correspondence is returned. I trust you will find this information responsive to your request.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Lee V. Gossick

Lee V. Gossick
Executive Director
for Operations

Enclosure:

Letter from Ms. Kathi Schulze

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bcc: Pacific Gas & Electric Company

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The Honorable Gaylord Nelson

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It is not known, at this time, what the final decision will be. However, the NRC's regulations require that the plant be designed to withstand the most severe earthquake that could be expected to occur at the site. This must be demonstrated before operation of the plant is permitted.

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Sincerely,

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