

MAR 18 1977

Docket No. 50-275  
and 50-323

The Honorable Sam I. Hayakawa  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Hayakawa:

I am pleased to respond to your letter of February 15, 1977, which refers to a letter from one of your constituents, Mr. Howard Osborne, dated January 27, 1977, in which he strongly opposes the opening of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California. His opposition is that he "feels that it is unsafe due to the possibility of an earthquake".

The Hosgri fault was discovered in 1971 close to the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant and has been the subject of investigation by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the U. S. Geological Survey and the Commission 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. There is no reason to be concerned about ground rupture at the plant site due to an earthquake. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (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.

3/17

It is not known, at this time, what the final decision will be.

I trust you will find this information responsive to your request.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Lee V. Gossick

Lee V. Gossick  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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\* \* SEE PREVIOUS YELLOW FOR PREVIOUS CONCURRENCE  
REWRITTEN PER E. CASE

bcc: Pacific Gas and Electric Company

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The Honorable Sam I. Hayakawa

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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.

I trust you will find this information responsive to your request.

Sincerely,

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