

Docket Nos. 50-275  
and 50-323

Honorable Robert J. Lagomarsino  
U. S. House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Lagomarsino:

Your letter of October 22, 1975 to the U. S. Energy Research and Development Administration, which forwarded the September 24 letter of your constituent, Mr. DeVincenzo, has been referred to me and I am pleased to respond.

Mr. DeVincenzo asked several questions concerning the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. Pacific Gas and Electric Company has nearly completed construction of Unit 1 at the Diablo Canyon site, about 12 miles from San Luis Obispo, California. Construction of Unit 2 at this site is more than half completed. Construction Permits for these units were granted in 1968 and 1970, respectively. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's staff is currently reviewing the Company's application for Operating Licenses for these units. Our responses to Mr. DeVincenzo's questions, based on the staff's review to date, are given below.

Mr. DeVincenzo asked how far the radiation would go if there were an earthquake and the plant should explode. As with other commercial nuclear power plants, we require that the Diablo Canyon Plant be designed to safely withstand severe earthquakes so that an earthquake cannot be expected to cause a release of significant amounts of radioactivity. Also, it is impossible for nuclear power plants to explode like a nuclear weapon. However, we do evaluate, in a conservative manner, the potential consequences of postulated accidents, such as ruptures of reactor coolant pipes, which could release radioactivity. Although these postulated accidents are very unlikely, safety features are provided in the plant to cope with them and to limit the amount of radioactivity that would be released to acceptable levels as defined in 10 CFR Part 100, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's "Reactor Site Criteria" (a copy of which is enclosed).

Mr. DeVincenzo asked where the radioactive wastes would be buried. The radioactive wastes created by plant operation will ultimately be shipped to government facilities for disposal. Some of these wastes, primarily low level wastes, may be buried at approved burial sites. Others, which are primarily the highly concentrated and long lived radioactive wastes that will result from the reprocessing of used nuclear fuel, will

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be stored to await final disposal. The specific method for final disposal of these highly concentrated wastes has not yet been selected. However, the present storage methods are considered to be safe and evaluations of methods suitable for the very long term are being conducted.

Mr. DeVincenzo suggested that the risks of having the plant close by should be borne by people living at another location if those people want the electric power. Of course, we will not allow operation of the plant unless we can determine that such operation is safe. However, this safety determination is independent of what segment of the population lives near the plant and of the extent to which persons living near the plant utilize its electrical output. Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that the Diablo Canyon site is well within Pacific Gas and Electric Company's service area, which covers most of Central and Northern California.

Mr. DeVincenzo asked if there is any way to stop the construction. The Commission's staff does not have any reason at this time for stopping construction. The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board is expected to begin public hearings near the plant site within the next few months to consider the issuance of Operating Licenses for the Diablo Canyon Plant. Members of the public may, at the discretion of the presiding officer, participate in the hearings by making limited appearances. A person making a limited appearance may state his position and may also raise questions which he would like answered. If the questions are relevant to the proceeding, the presiding officer may direct that they be answered by the parties. A member of the public may, alternately, petition for leave to intervene. If the petition were allowed he could become a party and participate more fully in the proceeding (including introducing motions, presenting evidence and cross examining witnesses). However, since the deadline for such petitions was November 19, 1973 for the Diablo Canyon Plant, such a petition would now need to make a substantial showing of good cause for late filing in order to be granted. The standards against which a late petition would be judged are set forth in Section 2.714 of 10 CFR Part 2, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's "Rules of Practice" (a copy of which is enclosed). If Mr. DeVincenzo should wish to participate in the proceedings, either by a limited appearance or by petitioning for leave to intervene, he should follow the procedures in the enclosed Federal Register Notice. He should substitute Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D. C. 20555 for Atomic Energy Commission in the addresses given in the Notice.

Finally, Mr. DeVincenzo asked about the number of units planned and discussed the temptation for sabotage. We have reviewed Pacific Gas and Electric Company's proposed measures to protect the Diablo Canyon Plant

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against sabotage and have found them acceptable. Nevertheless, in response to Mr. DeVincenzo's specific question, the Company has only applied to build the two units discussed above at the Diablo Canyon site. We are not aware of any plans to build additional units at or near this site. In addition, these two units would be a small fraction of the Company's total generating capacity and the electrical grid could withstand a loss of one or both of these units (since they may be unexpectedly lost for other reasons such as automatic plant shutdown or transmission line interruptions).

I trust that you will find this information responsive to Mr. DeVincenzo's questions.

Sincerely,

William J. Dircks  
Assistant Executive Director  
for Operations

Enclosures:

1. Code of Federal Regulations 10, Energy, Parts 0 to 199
2. Federal Register Notice of October 19, 1973; concerning Diablo Canyon, 38 FR 29105

OFFICE	RL:LWR 1-3	RL:AD/LWR 1	ELD	DRL	NRR	NRR
SURNAME	Dallison/Op	RCDeYoung		RSBord	ECCase	BCRusche
DATE	12/1/75	12/1/75	12/2/75	12/2/75	12/3/75	12/3/75

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