



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

November 16, 2012

Mr. Mike Ryan
Spokesman for Clean Nebraska
11130 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68154

Dear Mr. Ryan:

Thank you for your letter dated September 25, 2012, regarding flooding hazards at Fort Calhoun Station and the redaction of NRC internal correspondence on that subject.

With regard to the flooding hazard to Fort Calhoun, we share the concern of potential flooding impacts on facilities that we have licensed, and for this reason we have taken substantial steps to fully understand the scope of the issue and address it appropriately. Following the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors in Japan, the Commission initiated the Fukushima Near-Term Task Force and is aggressively pursuing implementation of the recommendations that came from that effort including reanalysis of seismic and flooding hazards around the nation's nuclear power plants.

New information suggests that flooding in some cases, may be greater than previously expected. The sources of this information include re-evaluations of dam failure frequencies, more modern analyses regarding maximum possible flood heights at some U.S. nuclear power plants, and inspections of flood protection barriers and related procedures at some U.S. nuclear power plants. The evaluation of generic dam failure frequencies derived from the generic issues effort, coupled with an assessment of the characteristics of dams upstream of commercial nuclear reactor sites, does not indicate a likelihood of failure requiring immediate mitigating action at nuclear power plants. Findings related to specific plants, which have been identified through the agency's inspection program, are being addressed individually using established NRC processes.

In the specific case you mention, Fort Calhoun, the preliminary study you cite was performed to assess the "worst case" scenario if the Oahe Dam failed. A full-scale evaluation of a dam failure and a more exact water height will be performed through the flood hazard reevaluation. The NRC is requiring all licensees to conduct a site specific study of external hazards that can affect each site, including the effects of flooding from dam failures.

The NRC's regulatory oversight of Fort Calhoun is governed by NRC Inspection Manual Chapter 0350, which requires the NRC to approve all of the licensee's corrective actions associated with a restart checklist before the unit is allowed to operate. The licensee is evaluating potential flooding effects. Any immediate safety concerns identified during the evaluation of the flooding effects at Fort Calhoun will be evaluated before the licensee is allowed to restart the nuclear power plant.

With regard to the redaction of the NRC internal correspondence, "Backfit Panel Regarding Fort Calhoun Flooding," dated, March 6, 2012, the now redacted information should

not have initially been made public, as subsequently determined by further review of our "Sensitive Unclassified Non-Safeguards Information" criteria. The author of the document, Mr. Thomas Blount, is the Deputy Director for the Division of Reactor Safety in NRC Region IV. It was his initial determination that the information could be publicly released. It was later determined that the original source of the information used in the document is a sensitive document and therefore its contents, as used in the redacted internal correspondent, should not have been made public. The redactions are consistent with Commission policy resulting from SECY-04-0191, "Withholding Sensitive Unclassified Information Concerning Nuclear Power Reactors from Public Disclosure," dated October 19, 2004, and the associated staff requirements memorandum dated November 9, 2004.

In addition, for the NRC's policy on redaction, please see Regulatory Issue Summary 2005-26, "Control of Sensitive Unclassified Nonsafeguards Information Related to Nuclear Power Reactors," which is available from the NRC's web-site.

Should you have additional questions, please contact Mr. Elmo Collins or the Region IV staff at (817) 200-1225.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allison M. Macfarlane", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Allison M. Macfarlane