



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION IV
611 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-8064**

March 31, 2000

William A. Eaton, Vice President
Operations - Grand Gulf Nuclear Station
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

SUBJECT: PLANT PERFORMANCE REVIEW - GRAND GULF NUCLEAR STATION

Dear Mr. Eaton:

The purpose of this letter is to communicate our assessment of your performance and to inform you of our planned inspections at your facility. On March 2, 2000, we completed a Plant Performance Review (PPR) of Grand Gulf Nuclear Station. We conduct these reviews to develop an integrated overview of the safety performance of each operating nuclear power plant. We use the results of the PPR in planning and allocating inspection resources and as inputs to our senior management meeting (SMM) process. This PPR evaluated inspection results and safety performance information for the period from January 25, 1999, through February 11, 2000, but emphasized the last 6 months to ensure that our assessment reflected your current performance. Our most recent summary of plant performance at Grand Gulf Nuclear Station was provided to you in a letter dated September 16, 1999.

The NRC has been developing a revised reactor oversight process that will replace our existing inspection and assessment processes, including the PPR, SMM, and Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP). We recently completed a pilot program for the revised reactor oversight process at nine participating sites and are making necessary adjustments based on feedback and lessons learned. We are beginning initial implementation of the revised reactor oversight process industry-wide, including your facility, on April 2, 2000.

This PPR reflects continued process improvements as we make the transition into the revised reactor oversight process. You will notice that the following summary of plant performance is organized differently from our previous performance summaries. Instead of characterizing our assessment results by SALP functional area, we are organizing the results into the strategic arenas embodied in the revised reactor oversight process. Additionally, in assessing your performance we have considered the historical performance indicator data that you submitted in January 2000 in conjunction with the inspection results. The results of this PPR were used to establish the inspection plan in accordance with the new risk-informed inspection program (consisting of baseline and supplemental inspections). Although this letter incorporates some terms and concepts associated with the new oversight process, it does not reflect the much broader changes in inspection and assessment that will be evident after we have fully implemented our revised reactor oversight process.

During the last 6 months, Grand Gulf Nuclear Station encountered several operating challenges. Power was reduced on several occasions to repair steam leaks on the main turbine first stage pressure sensing line, perform impeller work on a reactor feedwater pump, and repair a bushing on a main transformer. Overall, it was determined that Grand Gulf Nuclear Station continues to operate in a safe manner.

In the reactor safety strategic arena, we noted that you were challenged by failure of the high pressure core spray diesel generator, by continued leakage problems of the main steam isolation valves, and by balance-of-plant challenges to continuous power operations. The baseline inspection program will be adequate to monitor performance in this strategic arena.

In the radiation safety and safeguards strategic arenas, no significant performance issues were identified. Based on our assessment, only baseline inspections are planned for these strategic arenas.

Enclosure 1 contains a historical listing of plant issues, referred to as the Plant Issues Matrix (PIM), that were used during this PPR process to arrive at our integrated view of your performance trends. The PIM for this assessment is grouped by the prior SALP functional areas of operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support, although the future PIM will be organized along the cornerstones of safety as described in the revised reactor oversight process. The attached PIM includes items summarized from inspection reports or other docketed correspondence regarding Grand Gulf Nuclear Station. We did not document all aspects of licensee programs and performance that may be functioning appropriately. Rather, we only documented issues that we believe warrant management attention or represent noteworthy aspects of performance. In addition, the PPR may also have considered some predecisional and draft material that does not appear in the enclosed PIM, including observations from events and inspections that had occurred since our last inspection report was issued but had not yet received full review and consideration. We will make this material publically available as part of the normal issuance of our inspection reports and other correspondence.

Enclosure 2 lists our planned inspections for the period April 2000 through March 2001 at Grand Gulf Nuclear Station to allow you to resolve scheduling conflicts and personnel availability in advance of our inspector arrival onsite. The inspection schedule for the latter half of the period is more tentative and may be adjusted in the future due to emerging performance issues at Grand Gulf Nuclear Station or other Region IV facilities. Routine resident inspections are not listed due to their ongoing and continuous nature.

We will inform you of any changes to the inspection plan. If you have any questions, please contact me at (817) 860-8243.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Joseph I. Tapia, Chief
Project Branch A
Division of Reactor Projects

Docket No.: 50-416
License No.: NPF-29

Enclosures:

1. Plant Issues Matrix
2. Inspection Plan

cc w/enclosures:

Executive Vice President
and Chief Operating Officer
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 31995
Jackson, Mississippi 39286-1995

Wise, Carter, Child & Caraway
P.O. Box 651
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Winston & Strawn
1400 L Street, N.W. - 12th Floor
Washington, DC 20005-3502

Sam Mabry, Director
Division of Solid Waste Management
Mississippi Department of Natural
Resources
P.O. Box 10385
Jackson, Mississippi 39209

President, District 1
Claiborne County Board of Supervisors
P.O. Box 339
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Entergy Operations, Inc.

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General Manager
Grand Gulf Nuclear Station
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

The Honorable Richard Ieyoub
Attorney General
Department of Justice
State of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94005
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9005

Office of the Governor
State of Mississippi
Jackson, Mississippi 39201

Mike Moore, Attorney General
Frank Spencer, Asst. Attorney General
State of Mississippi
P.O. Box 22947
Jackson, Mississippi 39225

Dr. F. E. Thompson, Jr.
State Health Officer
State Board of Health
P.O. Box 1700
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Robert W. Goff, Program Director
Division of Radiological Health
Mississippi Dept. of Health
P.O. Box 1700
Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1700

Vice President
Operations Support
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 31995
Jackson, Mississippi 39286-1995

Director, Nuclear Safety
and Regulatory Affairs
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Entergy Operations, Inc.

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Vice President, Operations
Grand Gulf Nuclear Station
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Supervisor, District 2
Claiborne County
202 Magnolia Lane
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Supervisor, District 5
Claiborne County
Route 1, Box 296
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Vice President, District 4
Claiborne County Board
of Supervisors
P.O. Box 196
Hermanville, Mississippi 39086

Claiborne County Tax
Assessor/Collector
P.O. Box 469
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Director
Port Gibson/Claiborne County
Civil Defense Council
P.O. Box 358
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

Claiborne County Election
Commissioner, District 1
P.O. Box 301
Lorman, Mississippi 39096

Mayor
Town of Port Gibson
P.O. Box 466
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

James E. Maher, Director
Mississippi Emergency
Management Agency
P.O. Box 4501, Fondren Station
Jackson, Mississippi 39296-4501

Entergy Operations, Inc.

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Mayor
City of St. Joseph
P.O. Box 217
St. Joseph, Louisiana 71366

Edwin Preis, Mayor
City of Newellton
P.O. Box 477
Newellton, Louisiana 71357

Rick Foster, Director
Tensas Office of Emergency Preparedness
P.O. Box 768
St. Joseph, Louisiana 71366

Ronald Wascom, Administrator
State Liaison Officer
Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 82135
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70884-2135

Federal Emergency Management
Agency, Region IV
ATTN: John B. Copenhaver
Regional Director
3003 Chamblee Tucker Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

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