

March 31, 2000

Mr. M. Wadley
President, Nuclear Generation
Northern States Power Company
414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

SUBJECT: PLANT PERFORMANCE REVIEW - MONTICELLO

Dear Mr. Wadley:

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 6, 2000, we completed a Plant Performance Review (PPR) of Monticello. 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 February 1, 1999, through January 31, 2000, but emphasized the last 6 months to ensure that our assessment reflected your current performance. Our most recent summary of plant performance at Monticello was provided to you in a letter dated March 26, 1999.

The NRC has developed a revised reactor oversight process that will replace our existing inspection and assessment processes, including the PPR, the SMM, and the 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 plan to begin 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 function area, we are organizing the results into the strategic performance areas embodied in the revised reactor oversight process. In addition, we have considered the historical performance indicator data that you submitted in January 2000 in conjunction with the inspection results in assessing your performance. 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 oversight process.

During the last 6 months, power was reduced to 65 percent on October 14, 1999, for repair of a pipe hanger on an extraction steamline and was reduced to 70 percent because of a condenser transient that occurred when operators secured cooling tower pumps. Additional power reductions occurred on October 23 and 24 when power was reduced to 40 percent for condenser cleaning and on October 30 when power was reduced to 90 percent for control rod pattern changes. The most recent significant power change occurred on January 6, 2000, when the Unit was manually scrammed to start a refueling outage. We have not identified any significant performance issues in the reactor safety, radiation safety, and safeguards strategic areas during this assessment period and note that Monticello continues to operate in a safe manner. Therefore, we plan to conduct only baseline inspections at your facility as noted in the attached inspection plan.

Enclosure 1 contains a historical listing of plant issues, referred to as the Plant Issues Matrix (PIM), that were used during the 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 between the NRC and Northern States Power regarding Monticello. 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 attached 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 Monticello 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 Monticello or other Region III facilities. We also included some NRC non-inspection activities in Enclosure 2 for your information. Routine resident inspections are not listed due to their ongoing and continuous nature.

M. Wadley

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We will inform you of any changes to the inspection plan. If you have any questions, please contact me at (630) 829-9631.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Roger D. Lanksbury, Chief
Reactor Projects Branch 5
Division of Reactor Projects

Docket No. 50-263
License No. DPR-22

Enclosures: 1. Plant Issues Matrix
2. Inspection Plan

cc w/encls: Site General Manager, Monticello
Plant Manager, Monticello
S. Minn, Commissioner, Minnesota
Department of Public Service
P. Sawatzke, Chairman, Wright County Board
The Honorable Roger Belsaas
M. Johnson, Chairman, Sherburne County
R. Wolfsteller, Administrator, City of Monticello
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