

Trojan start-up appears questionable

By CATHERINE SIEGNER
Of the Emerald

The Trojan nuclear plant near Rainier may never get a chance to produce any more electricity this year.

Current hearings on whether operation may resume while the walls of the control building are strengthened have brought out additional safety questions that render a quick and easy federal decision unlikely.

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, an arm of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, is

now completing the hearings on Portland General Electric Co.'s request to start up the plant while the required modifications are being made.

An examination last March revealed the control building walls do not meet federal specifications for earthquake resistance. The NRC then ordered that Trojan be shut down.

Members of the public requested a hearing on the modifications, but because of PGE's mounting expenses for replacement power, ASLB Chair Miller

shall Miller agreed to address the interim operation question first.

The hearing began in Salem Oct. 23. After three days of witness cross-examination, Miller moved the operation to Portland for two days, where over 40 persons gave limited appearance testimony on interim start-ups.

This week, the hearing is back in Salem. On Monday, witnesses appeared for the plant's major contractor, Bechtel Corp. of San Francisco. Dr. Myle J. Holley, Jr. and Dr. Boris Bresler reviewed earthquake vibration studies the company had conducted on Trojan.

Both testified they were content with the studies, and that Trojan was strong enough now to operate during the modifications.

Officials of the state Department of Energy expressed concerns about analysis techniques PGE has used to assess equipment safety at the plant. PGE announced during last week's hearing that new problems with the earthquake resistance of cooling pipes had been discovered.

The company wanted to address this new difficulty along with the interim notice period before new questions may be discussed.

Since the ASLB is trying to end the hearing by Friday, it is not clear whether this problem will be included.

Don Godard, administrator for the siting and regulation for the



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State Department of Energy, said the department has questions on what analyses ought to be made on other buildings at Trojan in light of the most recent discovery.

"We question whether this new analysis technique is applicable to other buildings. The equipment behaves differently at different places."

Chairer Miller has stated he would not be available to conduct further hearings until December. Godard said this aspect could delay the entire procedure, including interim operation.

"It doesn't seem unreasonable to speculate that Trojan may not be restarted until after January," he said. "The NRC could decide, however, that Trojan has greater significance and schedule hearings before then."

With the additional safety questions, the ASLB may find it impossible to make a decision soon on the interim operation request.

Chairer Miller was heard to say at Wednesday's hearing that the "questions being raised are more appropriate to a Revocation of Operation License procedure."

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