

March 20, 2013

Via E-Mail

Michael Peevey, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mike:

I am registering my strong objection to being ejected from yesterday's ratepayer-funded workshop (co-sponsored by PG&E and SCE, along with Arizona Public Service) on Ground Motion Characterization for updating the seismic risk assessments at the Diablo Canyon, San Onofre, and Palo Verde nuclear power plants.

This three-day session was the first in a series of Ground Motion workshops in which the utilities update their seismic analyses to respond to the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission's post-Fukushima requirements. The process is supposed to be conducted in accordance with the NRC's SSHAC Level 3 guidelines, and the stated goals of this first installment were: "(i)dentify technical issues of highest significance to the hazard analysis"; "(r)eview available data that will be considered for constructing the GMC model", including "identification of data, information and/or additional work to be done"; and "address the evaluations to be performed in the period leading up to Workshop # 2." The agenda identified 82 participants and observers.

I attended the Ground Motion SSHAC workshop with two colleagues – Dr. Douglas Hamilton and David Weisman – on behalf of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, thinking that it was a public session, as PG&E's two earlier SSHAC workshops on Seismic Source Characterization have been. Upon my arrival I was told that the session was limited to official invitees, and that we would have to leave immediately. When I asked to speak to PG&E's Dr. Norman Abrahamson, the workshop's Technical Integrator, he informed me that the other utility co-sponsors had insisted that attendance be restricted.

I am aware that Southern California Edison imposed a similar limitation on its Seismic Source Characterization SSHAC workshop earlier this year, but mistakenly assumed that PG&E had found some benefit from its earlier transparency. The acute public interest in an open SSHAC process should be self-evident, as the NRC's instructional NUREG-2117 makes clear:

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- *"The objectives of the additional practical guidance in this NUREG are ... (2) standardization and complete and transparent documentation ... (3) increased regulatory assurance based on the transparency of the study's technical basis ..." (Foreword, p. v)*
- *"... but the goal would be to ensure that a broad range of views is considered." (Executive Summary, p. xvi)*
- *"... conducted in a transparent process ... provides greater assurance to a regulator that uncertainties have been effectively captured." (Executive Summary, p. xviii)*
- *"... a great advantage can be gained if the NRC (or any other relevant regulatory body or bodies) follow the entire process, primarily by attending the workshops as observers. Although observers in a SSHAC workshop are precluded from the technical discussions, we suggest that organizers allot some time at a specified time at the end of each day or each workshop to open the floor to questions and comments from observers." (Executive Summary, p. xix)*
- *"The transparency and thorough documentation of the process also provides confidence." (Executive Summary, p. xx)*
- *"Regulators are looking for high levels of assurance that hazard studies have properly captured the knowledge and uncertainties of the technical community and that the technical assessments are transparent and fully documented." (p. 2)*

Dr. Hamilton and Mr. Weisman attended both PG&E's 2011 and 2012 SSHAC workshops and I attended the 2012 sessions. At no point in any of those six days was the public's (mostly silent) presence even remotely disruptive, nor did there appear to be an inhibiting effect on the technical discussions. I have yet to hear a compelling rationale for keeping these seismic updates covert, and the fact that they are entirely funded by ratepayers makes doing so indefensible.

It would be hard to imagine a quicker way to undermine public confidence in the eventual results of these studies than shrouding them in secrecy. Which parts of the analyses are so fragile that they cannot withstand public scrutiny?

I ask that you urge both Southern California Edison and PG&E to rethink their commitment to this clandestine approach, or abandon any illusion that it is an acceptable expenditure of ratepayer funds.

Very truly yours,



John L. Geesman

cc: CPUC Commissioners