



Chris Nelson, Chairman
Kristie Fiegen, Vice Chairperson
Gary Hanson, Commissioner

South Dakota

**PUBLIC UTILITIES
COMMISSION**
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-5070
www.puc.sd.gov

(605) 773-3201

Consumer Hotline
1-800-332-1782

Email
puc@state.sd.us

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Patricia Van Gerpen
Executive Director
SD Public Utilities Commission
500 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501

RE: Docket EL17-042, Otter Tail Power Company's Far-Field Noise Emissions Test Report for Astoria Power Station

Ms. Van Gerpen,

On May 27, 2021, Otter Tail Power Company (Otter Tail) filed a Far-Field Noise Emissions Test Report (Report) for Astoria Station in accordance with Condition 30 of Astoria Station's permit. In the cover letter filed with the report Otter Tail noted that the far-field noise emissions test was completed with the unit operating at a gross load of 235 MWs, which is less than Astoria Station's 245 MW nominal load rating and, further, less than the actual achievable output for the date of the test of 260 MWs. This reduction in load was due to high vibration in the exhaust stack that would have resulted in Astoria Station exceeding the noise levels set forth in Condition 29 of the permit.

In order to maintain compliance with the permit, Otter Tail will limit load at Astoria Station to 235 MWs for standard periods of dispatch. Further, operations above 235 MWs will be limited to the daytime hours and for the purpose of troubleshooting/fixing the exhaust stack vibration issue. Once the vibration issue is resolved, Otter Tail plans to conduct another far-field noise emissions test with Astoria Station operating at or above 245 MWs in order to demonstrate compliance with the permit when the unit is operating at full load.

After reviewing the Report, Staff has no concerns with Otter Tail's plan to limit Astoria Station's gross load to 235 MWs in order to limit exhaust stack vibration and maintain compliance with the permit. However, once the vibration issue is resolved, Staff expects Otter Tail to file the updated far-field noise emissions test report demonstrating compliance at loads of 245 MWs or greater with the Commission prior to releasing Astoria Station to load levels above 235 MWs for standard periods of dispatch.

Finally, Staff finds that no action is needed by the Commission at this time since Otter Tail will maintain compliance with the permit sound limits at Astoria Station through operational measures until the excessive vibration is fixed and compliance is demonstrated through additional sound testing at full baseload levels.

Sincerely,

Darren Kearney
Utility Analyst
SD PUC Staff