

November 9, 2020

VIA E-MAIL

Commissioner Julie Fedorchak
North Dakota Public Service Commission
600 E. Boulevard, Dept. 408
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480

**RE: Aurora Wind Project, LLC
Aurora Wind Project – Williams County
Siting Application
Case No. PU-18-352**

Dear Commissioner Fedorchak:

As requested by Commission Staff, Aurora Wind Project, LLC (“Aurora”) provides the following additional information regarding an incident that occurred on October 30, 2020 in connection with construction of the Aurora Wind Project (“Project”) in Williams County, North Dakota.

The incident occurred during blade tensioning at one of the Project’s wind turbine generators. Based on Aurora’s preliminary root cause investigation, it has been determined that the Project contractor’s assembly crew did not properly follow the required installation method when tensioning the blades. Per the turbine blade manufacturer’s installation manual, the crew should have used a hydraulic turning gear to turn the rotor when tensioning the blades. Instead of using the turning gear to turn the rotor, the assembly crew yawed (oriented) the nacelle into the wind and pitched the blade, which caused the rotor to turn. Since there was no load on the rotor, the rotor sped up (beyond its design limits) and the crew could not immediately slow or stop the rotor. As a result, two of the blades touched the tower, damaging the blades. The damaged blades then slowed the rotor, and the crew was able to apply the brakes and insert a safety locking pin. No crew members were injured.

Aurora is still in the process of completing its root cause analysis (RCA) of the incident. Upon completion of the RCA, Aurora will develop a plan to remove the damaged components once wind conditions allow removal to be completed safely. Aurora will then inspect the tower from the inside and remove components. The timeline for replacement is currently uncertain, but Aurora plans to fully replace the wind turbine generator. Worker retraining was immediately implemented based on our initial understanding of the incident, and future remedial actions will be planned based on the results of the RCA.

Aurora understands that observers may assume that the incident was caused by high wind gusts. Although we are still completing our root cause analysis of the incident, our preliminary indications are that wind speeds were not the instigating factor.

Aurora’s first concern, as always, is ensuring the safety of our workers, contractors, and the surrounding communities. Therefore, we are asking the community to avoid the area of the incident

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while our investigation and removal efforts are underway. Once we have completed our investigation, we will further update the Commission. In the meantime, should the Commission have any questions, please contact Georg Becker-Birck.

Sincerely,

Georg Becker-Birck
Project Execution Manager
Aurora Wind Project, LLC
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