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FINAL REPLY:

Senator Fred Thompson

TO:

Dennis Rathbun, OCA

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

** GRN **

CRC NO: 01-0500

Travers, EDO

DESC:

Cracking at Two-Thirds of our Nation's Nuclear
Plants (Barbara Cornett)

ROUTING:

Travers
Paperiello
Kane
Norry
Craig
Burns/Cyr
Mallett, RII

DATE: 10/02/01

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NRR

Collins

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

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ACTION OFFICE: EDO

AUTHOR: SEN Fred Thompson
AFFILIATION: SEN
ADDRESSEE: Dennis Rathbun
SUBJECT: Forwards constituent's concerns regarding cracking at two-thirds of our nation's nuclear plants

ACTION: Signature of ~~Chairman~~ EPO
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LETTER DATE: 09/24/2001
ACKNOWLEDGED No
SPECIAL HANDLING: OCA to Ack

NOTES:
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DATE DUE: 10/25/2001 **DATE SIGNED:**

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FRED THOMPSON
TENNESSEE

COMMITTEES:
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
FINANCE
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4204
<http://thompson.senate.gov>

September 24, 2001

Mr. Dennis K. Rathburn
Director, Office of Congressional Affairs
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Rathburn:

I have enclosed a letter from a Tennessee constituent, Ms. Barbara Cornett.

I would appreciate any response that you could provide me regarding this issue.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Fred Thompson
United States Senator

FT:slm
Enclosure

Lotus cc:Mail for Senator Thompson

Date: 8/29/01 3:09 PM
Sender: nobody@w1.senate.gov
To: senator thompson
Priority: Normal
Subject: <no subject>

E Address2:=
J HPhone:=
K WPhone:=
required(A) Prefix:= MS
required(B) First Name:= Barbara
required(C) Last Name:= Cornett
required(D) Address:01= 140 Gibson Road
required(F) City:= Madisonville
required(G) State:= Tennessee
required(I) Zip:01= 37354
required(L) E-mail:= bcornett@bellsouth.net
required(M) Topic:= Other
required(N) Message:= Honorable Senator Thompson

I am very concerned about the following information that I found on the web.

August 27, 2001

NRC Ignores Widespread Safety Flaw for Decade
Two-thirds of nation's nuclear plants susceptible to dangerous cracking recently found in South Carolina plant

WASHINGTON, Aug. 27 -- For 10 years the Nuclear Regulatory Commission ignored a deterioration problem that affects the reactor vessels of two-thirds of the nation's nuclear power plants. While France and Japan moved swiftly to correct the problem in their plants after it first surfaced in 1991, the NRC has rejected efforts to replace the equipment in US plants, even though the problem emerged this spring at a nuclear plant in South Carolina.

"The federal agency entrusted to ensure that our nuclear reactors run safely should not turn a blind eye to a serious safety problem," said David Lochbaum, Nuclear Safety Engineer at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "We're lucky an accident hasn't occurred."

The deterioration problem, which is found in the nation's pressurized water reactors, is in the joints between the reactor vessel and the tubes that house control rods. These joints, or nozzles, are subject to severe stress from heating and are susceptible to cracking -- as was found in a French plant in 1991. If these cracks were to grow large enough they could lead to an ejection of the control rod, leakage of reactor cooling water, and failure of emergency systems, which could lead to a reactor meltdown.

"Instead of a band-aid fix, the NRC needs to follow the lead other

countries
have taken in protecting public safety by replacing the cracked reactor
vessel
heads." said Lochbaum. "Anything short of replacing this broken equipment
needlessly endangers the public."

Cracks discovered this spring at Oconee Unit 3 in South Carolina extended
nearly
45 percent of the way around two nozzles. With a crack this large the
massive
pressure in the reactor could result in a catastrophic rupture. In 1994 the
NRC
wrote a report on this type of cracking, based on an inspection of a single
US
nuclear plant, and claimed that cracks as large as the one at Oconee were
not
likely. In contrast, similar plants in Europe and Japan underwent
aggressive
safety precautions when the problem was discovered.

"Waiting a decade until an expected problem crops-up is bad enough,"
Lochbaum
said. "Waiting until an accident occurs is worse."
Search news releases

This is a very frightening situation. Will you please tell me what you
think
about this and if you believe you should take action about this problem. I
would truly appreciate your help and look forward to hearing your thoughts
about
this. Thank you.

Sincerely

Barbara Cornett

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4204

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U.S.S.

Mr. Dennis K. Rathburn
Director, Office of Congressional Affairs
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

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