

January 7, 2003

The Reverend Michael Beynon
c/o Second United Church of Christ
251 Verbecke Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Dear Reverend Beynon:

I am responding to your E-mail to Mr. Blough dated December 2, 2002, forwarding a Cleveland Plain Dealer article entitled, "Nuclear Plant Fiascoes Likely with Age, Secret Study Suggests." In your E-mail, you questioned whether the NRC and federal agencies see this reality (i.e., increased equipment problems at nuclear reactors as they age) and anticipate adequate responses. Thank you for forwarding the article. Mr. Blough had initially provided a brief response to you via E-mail; this letter provides a little more detail.

Although a number of original equipment components at nuclear power plants have already been replaced, the NRC recognizes that additional attention may be required to certain components at nuclear power plants as these facilities grow older. In response to significant licensee equipment and performance problems in the past, the NRC has performed lessons learned assessments to improve our regulatory performance. For example, the NRC recently conducted a detailed lessons learned review into the reactor vessel head degradation identified at the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Plant. The results of that review have been presented to the public and are available on the NRC's website. The NRC is now in the process of implementing the recommendations of the lessons learned review. Given the extensive amount of effort that went into this lessons learned review, as well as our ongoing efforts to improve future performance, we believe the NRC continues to demonstrate its willingness to learn from such experiences.

As you know, several years ago we revised our reactor oversight program to provide more focus and objectivity in our inspection and assessment processes. We continually evaluate our inspection and assessment programs and make appropriate resource adjustments based on performance issues in the nuclear power industry, such as the technical challenges associated with plant aging and materials issues. When significant resource changes are needed, we pursue those through the budget process. Although Congress has not yet approved our FY 2003 budget, our proposal does include some increase in our planned inspection resources.

The Reverend Michael Beynon

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I trust this information answers your question. Please contact me at 610/337-5146 if you have further questions in this matter.

Sincerely,

/RA/

John F. Rogge, Chief
Projects Branch 7
Division of Reactor Projects

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