February 5, 1998

EA #98-062

Mr. Donald A. Reid
Senior Vice President, Operations
Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
RD 5, Box 169
Ferry Road
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

SUBJECT: MAINTENANCE RULE TEAM INSPECTION REPORT NO. 50-271/97-81

Dear Mr. Reid:

This refers to the team inspection conducted on December 15-19, 1997, at the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station. The purpose of the inspection was to review the engineering review and analyses regarding Vermont Yankee's maintenance rule program in accordance with 10 CFR 50.65. The enclosed report presents the results of this inspection, which were also presented to Mr. Maret of your staff at a December 19, 1997, exit meeting.

Your program generally met the requirements of the maintenance rule and had some very good aspects. The only consistent difficulty noted in your staff's implementation of the maintenance rule was in meeting your administrative procedure expectations for some task timeliness. Your staff had done an good job including the appropriate structures, systems and components (SSCs) into the maintenance rule program. The on-line maintenance program was well planned and executed. The effective use of PRA (probabilistic risk assessment) and the active participation of the PRA group added to your program. The expert panel was effective. The staff implementing the maintenance rule program had an excellent understanding of the maintenance rule.

We understand that your staff plans to transfer control of the maintenance rule program from the maintenance organization to the system engineering organization. This may present some challenges to manage the transition and still maintain and possibly improve your effective maintenance rule program.

A Notice of Violation (NOV) for (a)(2) of the maintenance rule was identified for inadequate demonstration of the effectiveness of maintenance during a refueling outage. Specifically, your maintenance rule program did not require monitoring of unavailability for risk significant systems, structures, or components during refueling outages. In addition to not meeting (a)(2) of the rule, the failure to properly monitor unavailability during a refueling outage could also result in ineffective periodic balancing of reliability and unavailability as

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required by (a)(3) of the maintenance rule. This issue was also identified during your June 1997 QA audit but your staff had not resolved the QA issue. Your staff's corrective actions taken during the inspection were considered satisfactory and no additional response is required to the NOV.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter and its enclosure will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room.

Sincerely,

James T. Wiggins, Director
Division of Reactor Safety

Docket Nos.: 50-271

Enclosure: NRC Inspection Report Nos. 50-271/97-81 and Notice of Violation

cc w/encl:
R. McCullough, Operating Experience Coordinator - Vermont Yankee
G. Sen, Licensing Manager, Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
D. Rapaport, Director, Vermont Public Interest Research Group, Inc.
D. Tefft, Administrator, Bureau of Radiological Health, State of New Hampshire
Chief, Safety Unit, Office of the Attorney General, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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State of Vermont, SLO Designee
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