



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

Distribution:
VStello
JRoe
TRehm
JSniezek
EDO 1956
HDenton
JTaylor
TMurley
RStarostecki
HKister
SECY 86-722

Docket No.
50-293
OCA
GCunningham

August 25, 1986

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I am pleased to respond to your letter dated July 14, 1986, concerning the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Your letter points out concerns you and the residents of Massachusetts have regarding problems the NRC has identified at the Pilgrim Power Plant. You further encouraged NRC to take immediate measures to ensure the problems are corrected and you suggested that the NRC allocate additional resources to Pilgrim and that NRC prevent Pilgrim from operating until all safety issues have been thoroughly resolved.

I want to assure you that the NRC shares your concerns regarding the problems that have been identified at Pilgrim and that we are determined to see these problems resolved. There is a long history of problems associated with the Pilgrim plant that has already resulted in the NRC assigning high inspection priority to the plant. Since January 1982, the NRC has conducted over 192 inspections, totaling over 16,000 inspection hours at Pilgrim. This is approximately 50% more inspection hours than expended at other similar sites in the Northeast. Pilgrim will continue to receive such high priority. Most recently, NRC has temporarily assigned a third resident inspector to the site and we plan to station a third permanent resident inspector in the near future. Pilgrim will also continue to receive high priority in the assignment of inspections by regional based specialist inspectors. In addition, senior NRC management involvement will be continued through periodic meetings with senior Boston Edison Company (BECO) management.

Since shutting down on April 12, 1986, BECO has, on their own initiative, taken actions directed at correcting the problems that have been identified. These include a reorganization at the senior management level, recruiting of new plant and operations department managers, and initiation of a management improvement program. Most recently, on July 25, 1986, BECO announced their decision to keep Pilgrim shutdown until early 1987 in order to complete modifications to the plant including fire protection improvements and safety-related modifications to the primary containment. The NRC views these actions as indicative of an attitude change and commitment by BECO to correct their longstanding problems.

Originated: RI:Strosnider

Identical ltr to: The Honorable John F. Kerry

B/3

8608280100 860825
CF ADCK 05000293
CF

Notwithstanding the above, BECo's ineffective past efforts to improve and sustain improved performance indicate the need for continued vigilance by the NRC. This will be accomplished, as indicated above, through an aggressive inspection program and continuing management level reviews of the progress of BECo's improvement program. In addition, our plans include a special readiness assessment inspection prior to restart of the plant as well as special around the clock coverage of the plant during startup and initial operation. We will examine in particular the licensee's progress in bringing about significant improvement in those areas of weakness identified in the most recent Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance. As you may be aware, when the plant was shutdown on April 12, 1986, the NRC issued a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL 86-10). It is our plan to assure ourselves through our inspections and management meetings that all of the technical problems which led to the plant shutdown, and which have been identified since shutdown, have been satisfactorily resolved, that plant operation can be conducted in a safe manner, and that significant program and management improvements have been made and are observed to be effective prior to a restart. Follow-up observation by NRC will be necessary to confirm that lasting improvements have been implemented and accomplished. Further, the NRC with the assistance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency will assure that an acceptable level of emergency preparedness exists for the Pilgrim facility through enhanced inspection efforts and participation in an upcoming October 23, 1986 exercise. Finally, the Commission will personally meet with the licensee prior to a restart decision.

In conclusion, I believe that our efforts to date have resulted in the early identification of problems at Pilgrim. The staff has been aggressive in relying on its inspection results and providing effective analyses of these results through the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance to identify weaknesses to management and plant staff. I assure you that the NRC will continue to fulfill its responsibilities concerning the Pilgrim plant and will not hesitate to take those actions required to ensure the public health and safety.

Sincerely,



Frederick M. Bernthal
Acting Chairman