

Sienel, Beth

From: Thayer, Jay
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2003 5:12 PM
To: VTY - All Users
Subject: Recent Public Interest in Vermont Yankee Activities

Dear Fellow Vermont Yankee,

Over the past few days, there have been a number of stories in the local media about the issue of removing soil from an area located near the PSB office building and parking area at the Vermont Yankee site. This event has created unwarranted concern and deserves to be put in perspective.

Members of the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB), along with members of the anti-nuclear group New England Coalition (NEC), which is an intervener in the power uprate docket before the board, and several reporters visited VY last Friday to inspect the site, located within the owner-controlled area, of a proposed temporary building for the generator rewind project.

While on the tour, the group was informed that during excavation for the proposed building, 460 cubic yards of earth was removed from the site and stored at a gravel pit in Guilford. In reality, a much smaller amount of soil – 120 cubic yards – was taken to a gravel pit in Vernon.

That evening, several members of the NEC attended a public meeting hosted by the PSB in Brattleboro and began to voice fears that the soil moved off-site was contaminated with radionuclides and might pose a threat to public health.

Although there was no objective basis for these assertions, the media widely reported them and it was clear that we had a responsibility to take decisive action to avert needless public anxiety by showing that there was no danger to the community.

Therefore, one of the first things we did was to return 100 percent of the soil to the Vermont Yankee owner controlled area. This occurred on Sunday.

The Vermont Yankee Chemistry Department immediately tested the soil for radioactive contamination. As expected, the soil contains no contamination from the nuclear plant.

In addition to our own tests, Vermont Yankee is sending soil samples to an out-of-state, third party laboratory for an independent analysis. Further, we have invited the Vermont Department of Health to review the VY assessment and undertake their own analysis of the soil if they wish. They are currently scheduled to come to Vermont Yankee this Thursday and take samples which they will then split with us.

The Vermont Yankee site covers about 127 acres. The actual plant site, known as the "protected area," occupies only a small part of this acreage. The soil was removed from an area of the site that is not in proximity to the plant and from an area of office buildings and worker parking. It is not an area that involves radioactive materials.

To protect the public health and safety, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has strict standards for the removal of construction products like topsoil from nuclear sites. Given the location of the project, our actions were in full compliance with NRC requirements, which clearly do not require the testing of soil from this portion of the site prior to its removal. In addition, Vermont Yankee's RP and

Chemistry Departments were consulted and agreed with the removal of the materials in accordance with established procedure.

As a point of information, the 460 cubic yards of earth which was originally reported as being removed from the VY site was in fact the amount estimated in the engineering plans for the proposed building. The actual excavation resulted in about 250 cubic yards being dug up, but about 130 yards were used to level the ground around the proposed building slab, leaving only 120 yards to be moved off-site.

The news stories also originally said the VY dirt was stored at a gravel pit in Guilford. It was later learned the dirt was sent to a gravel pit in Vernon. This error probably resulted from the fact that the LaRock and Sons excavation company is located in Guilford and it was assumed that the soil was taken there.

Our work at the Vermont Yankee Station always puts safety first. The actions we have taken over the weekend were taken to emphasize our commitment to this community to act responsibly whenever a question exists. I hope this information has been helpful to you.

Jay Thayer