

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM: DUE: 08/30/04

EDO CONTROL: G20040556
DOC DT: 08/12/04
FINAL REPLY:

Representative Edward J. Markey

TO:

Chairman Diaz

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

** PRI **

CRC NO: 04-0520

Chairman Diaz

DESC:

ROUTING:

Lax Safety Conditions that may Exist at U.S.
Reactors (Referencing the 8/9/04 Fatal Accident
at the Mihama Nuclear Power Plant in Japan)
(Response Due: 9/10/04)

Reyes
Virgilio
Kane
Merschhoff
Norry
Dean
Burns/Cyr
Congel, OE
Paperiello, RES
Collins, RI
Travers, RII
Caldwell, RIII
Mallett, RIV

DATE: 08/13/04

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NRR

Dyer

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

Coordinate response with OE and RES.

Template: SECY-017

E-RIDS: SECY-01

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

Date Printed: Aug 12, 2004 15:30

PAPER NUMBER: LTR-04-0520

LOGGING DATE: 08/12/2004

ACTION OFFICE: EDO

REC'D OIL EDO
Date: 8/13/04
Time: 9:10 am

AUTHOR: Edward Markey

AFFILIATION: REP

ADDRESSEE: Nils Diaz

SUBJECT: Ref the August 9, 2004 fatal accident at the Mihama nuclear power plant in Mihama, Japan....concerned about the lax safety conditions that may exist at U.S. reactors

ACTION: Signature of Chairman

DISTRIBUTION: RF, OCA to Ack

LETTER DATE: 08/12/2004

ACKNOWLEDGED No

SPECIAL HANDLING:

NOTES: Commission Correspondence

FILE LOCATION: ADAMS

DATE DUE:

~~08/12/2004~~ 9/1/04

DATE SIGNED:

EDWARD J. MARKEY
7TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

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RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND
THE INTERNET

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August 12, 2004

The Honorable Nils J. Diaz
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD, 20852

Dear Chairman Diaz:

I am writing regarding the August 9, 2004 fatal accident at the Mihama nuclear power plant in Mihama, Japan. I am concerned that lax safety conditions may also exist at the many reactors in the U.S. that are similarly designed and operated.

As you know, 4 nuclear reactor workers were killed on August 9 2004 when super-heated steam escaped from a ruptured pipe in a building housing turbines for a reactor at the Mihama nuclear power plant. The pipe section that ruptured reportedly had not been inspected in 28 years, and the thickness of the pipe was subsequently found to have been well below the safety standard.

A similar incident has already occurred in the U.S. In 1986, a non-radioactive leak in the turbine building at the Surry nuclear power plant in Virginia scalded 8 workers, 4 of whom died as a result of their injuries. Other workers were also severely injured in the accident. A March 18, 1988 Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation into this matter that I requested concluded that the events raised "questions about the long-term safety of pipe systems in nuclear power plants."

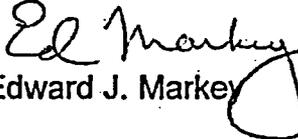
It is my understanding that after the Surry accident the NRC required owners to improve their "erosion/corrosion" programs that measured the wall thicknesses of high energy (based on temperature and pressure) piping. I am interested in the status of these programs, particularly in light of the accident in Japan. Consequently, I ask for your prompt responses to the following questions:

- 1) How often are licensees required to measure the wall thicknesses of their pipes, and what fraction of a reactor's pipes are required to be measured each time?
- 2) What technologies are permitted to be used to accomplish these inspections?
- 3) How does NRC's inspection efforts ensure that the erosion/corrosion programs are being conducted as frequently and as completely as is required?
- 4) What generic communications has the NRC issued to its licensees regarding erosion/corrosion problems? Please provide copies.

- 5) One of the lessons the NRC learned from Davis-Besse was that its licensees had not always honored commitments they made to the NRC in response to the agency's generic communications. Is the NRC confident that its licensees still abide by commitments made to the NRC's generic communications on erosion/corrosion? If the NRC is confident that these commitments are being fulfilled by licensees, on what basis does the NRC make this conclusion? If the NRC is not confident, what is the Commission doing to ensure licensee compliance?
- 6) Has NRC ever undertaken enforcement action against licensees who failed to properly perform these inspections? If so, when, against which licensees and as a result of activities at which reactors? What were the penalties imposed?
- 7) How many times since these inspections began did licensees discover corrosion levels that caused the pipes to fail to meet the minimum safety standards?

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. Please provide your response no later than close of business on September 10, 2004. If you have any questions or concerns, please have your staff contact Dr. Michal Freedhoff of my staff at 2022252836.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey