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FINAL REPLY:

Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Senator Thomas R. Carper

TO:

Chairman Diaz

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

** PRI **

CRC NO: 04-0653

Chairman Diaz

DESC:

ROUTING:

Salem and Hope Creek Nuclear Generating Station

Peyes
Virgilio
Kane
Merschhoff
Norry
Dean
Kim, OEDO
Dyer, NRR
Zimmerman, NSIR

DATE: 10/20/04

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

RI

Collins

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

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ACTION OFFICE: EDO

AUTHOR: SEN Joseph Biden
AFFILIATION: SEN
ADDRESSEE: *Chairman N. L. D. 10/2*
SUBJECT: Salem and Hope Creek nuclear generating station

ACTION: Signature of Chairman
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LETTER DATE: 10/14/2004
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NOTES: Commission Correspondence
FILE LOCATION: ADAMS
DATE DUE: 11/02/2004 DATE SIGNED:

10/15/04 16:05 FAX 3025738351

US SEN. JOSEPH BIDEN

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United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

October 14, 2004

The Honorable Nils J. Diaz
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs (OPA)
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Diaz:

We are writing regarding the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear generating station located on the Delaware River in New Jersey. As you are probably aware, we both have long had a keen interest in the station. Approximately 20,000 Delawareans and 17 Delaware schools are located within 10 miles of the station.

During the 1980's and 1990's, we were particularly concerned with operations at the Salem I and II units after a series of serious malfunctions occurred that could potentially have led to catastrophic results. Many of those malfunctions were preventable making the situation even more egregious. Inadequate management practices and worker concern over retaliation for reporting were identified as key contributors leading up to these incidents.

At the time, we were struck not only by the decision of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) not to fine the operator for some of these incidents, but also by the lack of importance the NRC seemed to place on these incidents when they occurred. In 1996, the General Accounting office undertook a study at the request of Senator Biden and concluded that there was an on-going need to improve NRC's oversight responsibilities in order to improve safety conditions at all of the nation's nuclear power plants, including Salem and Hope Creek.

We are concerned that Salem and Hope Creek are once again experiencing management and safety culture deficiencies, similar in part to conditions experienced in the 1980s and the 1990s. While we do not yet have a complete report on the non-radioactive steam leak which occurred at the Hope Creek unit on October 10, 2004, it draws attention to the need for vigilant review of our nation's nuclear reactors.

Please be aware that we are closely scrutinizing plant operations and strongly urge you to do the same. We understand that the NRC has implemented additional oversight at the station in recent years, and we are hopeful that your increased activity will quickly improve conditions at the facility.

10/15/2004 04:09PM

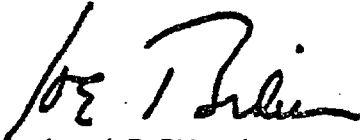
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US SEN. JOSEPH BIDEN

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Thank you for your attention in this matter. We look forward to hearing more from you in the future regarding your actions and oversight related to the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear generating facility. In addition, we would be interested in receiving updated information regarding the latest steam leak at the Hope Creek facility. Please feel free to contact us through our respective staffs at the following offices: Ms. Tonya Baker, Senator Biden's office at (302) 573-6345 and Mr. Jim Reilly, Senator Carper's office at (202) 224-2441.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

10/15/2004 04:09PM /