

May 27, 2005

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-0702

Dear Senator Dodd:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of April 27, 2005, to Chairman Diaz, regarding the April 17, 2005, event at the Millstone Power Station, Unit 3, in Waterford, Connecticut, owned by Dominion Nuclear Connecticut, Inc. Your letter forwarded correspondence from a constituent of yours with concerns regarding the event and conditions at the Millstone station. You requested that the NRC consider your constituent's request.

NRC Region I sent a special inspection team to Millstone to review the circumstances surrounding the event. The team of inspectors conducted on-site independent reviews of Dominion's actions to determine the root cause of the event, the extent of condition of any identified problems, and corrective actions. The special inspection included a detailed review of the apparent root cause, a failed circuit card in the solid state protection system, which generated a protection signal and associated equipment responses. The team found that Dominion's initial response to the event was prompt and that, while some operational and equipment challenges occurred during the event, operators safely shutdown the plant with no consequences to public health and safety.

We understand that your constituent requested a public meeting prior to Unit 3 restart. Prior to plant restart on April 28, 2005, the team ensured that the licensee had thoroughly reviewed the circumstances surrounding the event and had taken appropriate actions to address any issues that could impact the safe operation of the plant. Furthermore, on May 18, 2005, members of the inspection team and NRC managers presented the preliminary results of the special inspection at a public meeting hosted by the Nuclear Energy Advisory Committee (NEAC). The NRC staff informed your constituent of the meeting location and time. At this meeting, members of the public, including your constituent who was an active participant, had an opportunity to learn more about the event and ask questions about NRC oversight of the Millstone station. The final disposition of the NRC's findings from the special inspection will be documented in an inspection report to be issued within 45 days of the meeting.

In addition to reviewing Dominion's actions associated with this event, the NRC staff maintains a continuous review of station issues through the Resident Inspectors who are permanently assigned to the site. The NRC oversees activities at nuclear power plants through our Reactor Oversight Process. We assess the significance of our inspection findings and other plant performance indicators based on the risk to plant safety, and increase our oversight for issues of greater significance. Within the past year, all inspection findings at both Unit 2 and Unit 3, including the issues presented by your constituent, have been of very low safety significance, and currently all performance indicators are at a level requiring no additional NRC oversight.

Annually, we perform an “end-of-cycle” assessment of overall plant performance. In our most recent annual assessment for 2004, we found that both Millstone units operated in a manner that preserved public health and safety.

The NRC is committed to ensuring the protection of public health and safety through oversight of the facilities that we regulate. NRC actions have been focused on ensuring safe operations at Millstone. The plant would not have been allowed to startup unless the NRC believed it was safe. Additionally, I want to assure you that the NRC will continue to oversee Dominion’s actions to address technical issues at Millstone, and will maintain openness for public involvement in the regulatory process. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Luis A. Reyes
Executive Director
for Operations

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