

From: Neil Sheehan *RT*
To: INTERNET: KCosa@TheReformer.Com
Date: 3/30/04 2:54PM
Subject: re: Vermont Yankee editorial

Kate,

I read the editorial you wrote for today's paper headlined "Why bother." I'd like to respond to at least a few of the points you raised:

1.) The response to the Senators explained why the Maine Yankee Independent Safety Assessment (ISA) experience is not applicable to Vermont Yankee's power uprate application. However, the letter DOES NOT represent the agency's position on the Vermont Public Service Board's conditional approval of the Vermont Yankee uprate.

2.) The NRC continues to examine the board's conditional approval of the uprate. Our reply to the board's March 15th letter will come after the public meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

3.) Although our reply to the PSB has not yet been issued, areas of the agency's normal oversight and uprate review processes appear to coincide with the PSB's concerns, including:

A.) The NRC and independent contractors have inspected Vermont Yankee's design and licensing basis several times since the Maine Yankee ISA, and Vermont Yankee passed those inspections.

B.) Although the NRC does not issue decisions on a plant's reliability for generating electricity, portions of the agency's Reactor Oversight Process assess a plant's criteria for minimizing system unavailability, and therefore provide some insight into reliability going forward.

C.) In August of this year, the NRC will conduct a biannual safety system design inspection at Vermont Yankee, requiring several inspectors to perform about 500 hours' worth of direct inspection on one or two systems, as well as cross-cutting issues related to plant safety.

D.) The power uprate review process examines equipment modifications and maintenance necessary for the plant to handle increased power output. This review covers both safety-related and other plant systems.

E.) If any portion of the NRC's inspections and reviews identifies additional areas for examination, the agency is fully prepared to escalate its inspection activity as needed.

4.) Your second-to-last paragraph states that a public hearing "will" be scheduled at a later date, according to me. Again, a hearing will be only be scheduled if an individual(s) or group(s) file a petition to intervene in the proceeding and win that right by demonstrating standing and raising concerns that are found to have merit.

Please call if you need any further clarification. Otherwise, I hope to see you at the meetings tomorrow.

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