

December 16, 2005

The Honorable James M. Jeffords  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Jeffords:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing in response to your letter of November 10, 2005, in which you urged the NRC to fully evaluate the condition of the steam dryer at the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (Vermont Yankee) as the NRC staff reviews the proposed extended power uprate (EPU) request from Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee, LLC and Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (Entergy). I am pleased to take this opportunity to update you on the NRC's actions to address this issue.

During the fall 2005 refueling outage at Vermont Yankee, Entergy performed an enhanced visual inspection which identified 46 indications of small cracks in the steam dryer. These were in addition to 18 indications identified during the spring 2004 outage. Although the previous dryer inspection was conducted in accordance with the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code, it was expected that additional indications would be found during the 2005 outage based on use of visual examination techniques that provided greater magnification and resolution. The enhanced inspection also confirmed that none of the previously-identified cracks had propagated in width or length since the last inspection.

Entergy currently believes that, like the previously-identified indications, these new indications developed sometime early in plant operational history, and will not affect the steam dryer structural integrity at current power conditions or at the proposed EPU conditions. None of the identified indications required repairs; however, Entergy did make modifications during the 2004 outage to provide additional structural support to the steam dryer to address generic industry issues with steam dryer integrity. Entergy will continue to monitor the indications during future inspections to ensure there is no further change to the individual indications.

The NRC is closely monitoring Entergy's steam dryer examination and evaluation activities. A specialist inspector from the NRC's Region I office was sent to the site to review the steam dryer inspection results. Further, specialists from Region I and NRC Headquarters reviewed the examination data and steam dryer evaluation. The NRC reviews did not identify problems with the steam dryer crack evaluation and disposition that would cause concern with operation of Vermont Yankee at current licensed conditions.

Entergy is completing its final evaluation of the new steam dryer indications with regard to EPU operation. The NRC will thoroughly review the final evaluation as part of the proposed EPU review. Additionally, if the proposed EPU is granted, a condition would be added to the Vermont Yankee license for Entergy to monitor and evaluate the effects of increased steam flow on the steam dryer, and promptly take actions as necessary to resolve any adverse flow effects.

The NRC's primary mission is to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety. The NRC will not approve the Vermont Yankee EPU, or any proposed change to any plant license, unless our technical staff can conclude that it has reasonable assurance that adequate protection of public health and safety will be ensured.

Sincerely,

***/RA/***

Luis A. Reyes  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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Identical letters sent to Patrick Leahy, Bernard Sanders and John W. Olver

Package: ML053210457

Incoming: ML053180442

Response: ML053210401

\*Concurrence via email

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Identical letters sent to:

The Honorable James M. Jeffords  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John W. Olver  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 16, 2005

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing in response to your letter of November 10, 2005, in which you urged the NRC to fully evaluate the condition of the steam dryer at the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (Vermont Yankee) as the NRC staff reviews the proposed extended power uprate (EPU) request from Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee, LLC and Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (Entergy). I am pleased to take this opportunity to update you on the NRC's actions to address this issue.

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Luis A. Reyes  
Executive Director  
for Operations

December 16, 2005

The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Sanders:

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