

April 26, 2006

Ida R. Chamberlin  
P.O. Box 318  
Newfane, VT 05345-0318

Dear Ida Chamberlin:

I am responding to your letter dated March 16, 2006, concerning your comments as a result of your attendance at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) License Renewal Public Information Meeting conducted on March 1, 2006, near the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station. In your letter, you expressed concerns regarding the NRC's license renewal review process and its regulation of nuclear power plants. I want to assure you that although review of the power uprate, evacuation plans, and storage of highly radioactive waste are not reviewed again as part of the license renewal review process, these very important issues are the subject of extensive ongoing NRC oversight. The NRC does have the primary role in the oversight of the power uprate, evacuation plans, and storage of highly radioactive waste. The following is additional detail concerning the specifics of the NRC's license renewal review and a description of the NRC's role in the oversight of the other important issues you identified.

For its review of the Vermont Yankee application, NRC will use the same license renewal application review process it has used for all previous license renewal applications. The review process is both comprehensive and exhaustive, specifically:

1. NRC will assess, in detail, a wide range of important safety and environmental issues.
2. NRC will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) and document the impact of extended operation for Vermont Yankee.
3. NRC will focus its safety review on the licensee's management programs for aging structures and components.
4. NRC will conduct several public meetings near the plant to encourage public participation in the license renewal application review process, including the meeting conducted on March 1, 2006, which you attended.

NRC has established clear requirements, codified in Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Parts 51 and 54, to assure safe plant operation for extended plant life. When evaluating an applicant's compliance with license renewal requirements, the NRC staff follows the established review process for a license renewal application. First, the NRC staff conducts an independent and thorough review of the licensee's renewal application. NRC documents its review results by preparing safety evaluation reports and environmental impact statements. Second, the NRC staff verifies that the licensee has met the applicable regulations and has implemented license renewal programs and activities consistent with its application for license renewal. The NRC staff often communicates with Federal, State, and local agencies to gather necessary information and to evaluate and disclose the environmental impact of extended plant operation. NRC uses its environmental review to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

In response to your specific comments regarding the NRC's role in the regulation of other aspects of nuclear plant operation, I am providing the following information concerning the agency's mission. The NRC's primary goal is to regulate the safe uses of radioactive materials for civilian purposes to ensure the protection of public health and safety and the environment. The NRC places significant emphasis on strengthening the interrelationship among safety, security, and emergency preparedness. The NRC achieves its goal by licensing individuals and organizations to use radioactive materials for beneficial civilian purposes and then ensuring that the performance of these licensees is at, or above acceptable safety levels. In particular, we maintain vigilance over safety performance through ongoing licensing reviews and inspections, and expanded oversight. We also use enforcement actions for significant deficiencies, including issuing orders for corrective action, issuing shutdown orders, imposing civil penalties and/or criminal prosecution, or when appropriate, suspending or revoking a license. The NRC recognizes that close cooperation among Federal agencies, State authorities, and local governments will lead to the most effective regulation. Therefore, the NRC works with other Federal agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure appropriate coordination of safety and security measures at nuclear facilities.

As an integral part of the reactor oversight process, NRC performs safety performance inspections (e.g., baseline, supplemental, and event follow-up inspections) of nuclear plants. These inspections will continue during the period of extended operation if the Vermont Yankee license is renewed. NRC reviews quarterly the inspection results and performance indicator data to determine if plant performance warrants either a change in inspection effort or NRC regulatory oversight.

I hope this information is useful in understanding the NRC's license renewal review process and its regulation of nuclear power plants. If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

**/RA/**

Johnny H. Eads, Sr. Project Manager  
License Renewal Branch B  
Division of License Renewal  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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Sincerely,

**/RA/**

Johnny H. Eads, Sr. Project Manager  
 License Renewal Branch B  
 Division of License Renewal  
 Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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Letter to Ida Chamberlin from Johnny Eads dated April 26, 2006

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