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September 19, 2008

Samuel Collins, Regional Administrator
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
U.S. NRC Region I
475 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1415

Re: Vermont Yankee Cooling Towers

Dear Sam:

As you are already well aware, Vermont Yankee once again experienced leaking problems with its cooling towers and is derated while Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee personnel investigate the cause and extent of the problem. At this point we know of six support columns within the East cooling tower that need replacing. One of those is not only degraded but broken. Vermont is extremely concerned about the repeated cooling tower problems occurring at the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station from a safety and reliability perspective. Recurring failures of this nature are totally unacceptable.

Recently NRC did a Special Inspection at Vermont Yankee regarding the cooling towers and whether any of the problems experienced to date could be present in the safety or seismic cells. I understand that the report on that Special Inspection is due out shortly. However, I am writing to ask you to immediately send an additional team to Vermont Yankee before your Special Inspection is completed and consider whether any of the newly discovered cooling tower problems could affect the safety or seismic cooling tower cells. While your inspection team will focus on safety, our Comprehensive Vertical Audit inspection team will be looking at the failures from a reliability standpoint through engineering and management assessments.

We need your help to get to the bottom of these repeated cooling tower failures. With each of us doing our respective jurisdictional inspections, we will have a good picture of what is causing these recurring problems. I thank you in advance for your assistance.

Very truly yours,

For David O'Brien, Commissioner
Vermont Department of Public Service