



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
2100 RENAISSANCE BOULEVARD, SUITE 100
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-2713

September 12, 2012

Mr. William M. Craft
Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Town of Ipswich
Town Hall
25 Green Street
Ipswich, MA 01938

Dear Mr. Craft:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter dated August 6, 2012. Specifically, as Chairman of the Board for the Town of Ipswich, you and the selectmen expressed concerns regarding the concrete degradation noted at Seabrook Station due to an Alkali-Silica Reaction (ASR), and urged the agency to take steps to fully address the matter to ensure the safety of the public in the future. You also expressed concerns regarding NextEra's performance during their Seabrook Biennial Full-Scale Emergency Exercise that was conducted on April 17, 2012.

The NRC continues to thoroughly evaluate the ASR technical issue. We have been conducting inspections and technical reviews to evaluate and assess this issue, and the NRC has concluded that, despite the observed degradation, the structures affected by ASR remain able to perform their safety-related functions. The license renewal schedule has and will continue to be impacted because no decision can be made until the extent of the longer-term implications of the concrete degradation and the effectiveness of any remedies are fully understood.

On May 16, 2012, the NRC issued NextEra a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL) that formally documents commitments the licensee has made to the NRC to address the ASR issue. The CAL (attached) will remain in effect until the NRC has concluded that all actions listed in the CAL have been satisfactorily completed and an acceptable basis has been established to assure that the continued operability of concrete structures will be maintained. The NRC staff will hold a public meeting sometime later this year to inform the public of the status its review of the information provided in response to the CAL. The meeting will be held at a location near Seabrook Station. A public meeting notice will be issued when that meeting has been scheduled.

With respect to the concerns you raised regarding the Seabrook Biennial Full-Scale Emergency Exercise, I would like to provide you with some general background on the conduct of a nuclear power plant's emergency exercises. In accordance with the NRC's Code of Federal Regulations, 10 CFR 50.47(b)(14), owners (licensees) of nuclear power plants are required to conduct a full-scale emergency exercise every two years. Likewise, State and local agencies located within the 10 mile Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) are also required to exercise their offsite emergency plans every two years. The onsite and offsite exercises are generally conducted together. The NRC does not sponsor the exercise, and the licensee is responsible to develop the exercise scenario.

The NRC independently inspects the licensee's exercise performance to evaluate their capability to respond to a simulated nuclear accident. The Federal Emergency Management Agency evaluates the performance of the State and local officials. An emergency exercise is an opportunity for the licensee to perform their emergency response functions and to identify and correct any weaknesses in their performance. As is the nature of training exercises, weaknesses may occur; however, it is required that these weaknesses be identified during the post-exercise critiques and corrected. It is through the identification and correction of such weaknesses that the licensee improves its ability to respond to an actual event. Therefore, the NRC places a high degree of import on the ability of licensee's to identify any exercise weaknesses.

During the April 17, 2012, Seabrook exercise, the NRC inspection team identified that NextEra did not independently identify an exercise weakness during their post-exercise critique that involved errors in the development of the protective action recommendation (PAR) generated immediately after the declaration of a General Emergency (GE). Specifically, at the time of the GE declaration, a simulated radiological release was not in progress. Due to a human error while using an emergency response procedure, the licensee incorrectly developed a PAR as if a release was in progress. This impacted the identification of which sectors within the 10 mile EPZ would be recommended for evacuation. While delivering the incorrect PAR to the States, the licensee identified a simulated radiological release had begun so the incorrect PAR became correct. Therefore, the error would ultimately not have impacted the States' ability to make an adequate protective action decision.

However, as stated earlier, the identification and subsequent correction of exercise weaknesses is a important aspect of these training exercises. The licensee's failure to identify this issue during their post-exercise critique did not provide the necessary assurance to the NRC that the issue would be entered into the licensee's corrective action system to prevent recurrence. Attached for your information is the NRC's final significance determination letter issued on August 7, 2012. A follow-up NRC inspection will be conducted to ensure the licensee takes the appropriate corrective actions regarding the exercise weakness.

Thank you for your interest in these matters. The agency certainly shares your concern with ensuring the safety of the Seabrook Station. Through the efforts of our onsite resident inspectors and implementation of a comprehensive inspection program, the NRC has continuous oversight of the licensee's activities. The NRC holds the licensee accountable for ensuring that the plant is operated in a safe manner and that its emergency response program is maintained in a constant state of readiness for protecting the public health and safety.

Town of Ipswich
Board of Selectmen

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If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Nancy McNamara, Regional State Liaison Officer at (610) 337-5337.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William M. Dean
Regional Administrator

Enclosures:
As stated

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If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Nancy McNamara, Regional State Liaison Officer at (610) 337-5337.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William M. Dean
Regional Administrator

Enclosures:
As stated

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