



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

AUG 4 1987

The Honorable Carl Levin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Levin:

I am responding to your letter dated July 9, 1987 addressed to Mr. Carlton Kammerer, which enclosed a copy of a letter from Dr. and Mrs. Bob Messer urging you to support the efforts of the Union of Concerned Scientists to close the Babcock and Wilcox (B&W)-designed nuclear plants. The plants cited by the Messers are Three Mile Island, Unit 1; Davis-Besse; Rancho Seco; Arkansas Nuclear One, Unit 1; Oconee, Units 1, 2 and 3; and Crystal River, Unit 3.

The petition to which the Messers referred was submitted by the Union of Concerned Scientists on February 10, 1987 pursuant to 10 CFR 2.206. The petition was then referred to the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. The petition requested the Commission to (1) require all utilities operating or building nuclear power reactors designed by B&W to modify their nuclear generating facilities to correct alleged safety deficiencies; (2) hold public hearings on the sufficiency of modifications required by (1) to correct the alleged deficiencies; and (3) revoke the operating license or construction permit of any utility that does not meet any proposed requirements that emerge from (1) and (2).

By letter dated March 13, 1987, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, informed the Union of Concerned Scientists that the concerns expressed in the petition did not warrant immediate suspension of the operating licenses and construction permits in question, but that the staff would continue to review the petition and issue a formal decision.

Since the Three Mile Island, Unit 2 accident in 1979, the utilities have made a substantial number of improvements at the B&W-designed plants. The NRC staff report, "Clarification of TMI Action Plan Requirements," NUREG-0737, issued by letter dated October 31, 1979, specifies some of these improvements. However, the number and complexity of transients from normal operating conditions at the B&W-designed plants still concerned the NRC. After the transients at the Davis-Besse plant in June 1985 and the one at the Rancho Seco plant in December 1985, I directed that the long-term safety of nuclear reactors designed by B&W be reassessed. This additional review of the adequacy of the B&W design is aimed at possible further improvements in a design already modified since the TMI accident.

The Babcock and Wilcox Owners Group (BWOG), made up of representatives from each utility that operates B&W-designed plants, has taken a leadership role in the reassessment effort. The BWOG Safety and Performance Improvement Program has been modified at the request of the staff, and its implementation is being closely reviewed and monitored by the NRC. The NRC staff has met with the Owners Group numerous times and is performing independent reviews to ensure that NRC concerns are resolved.

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Petition
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Since the B&W plant reassessment began, more than 170 recommendations have been referred to the B&W plant owners, who have implemented, or are implementing, many of these recommendations. These changes have already improved plant safety by improving the integrated control systems and the performance of the main feedwater system to reduce the number of challenges to safety systems due to feedwater transients. Because of these changes, the staff concludes that the plants are safer now than they were a year ago. The NRC found no undue risk in the utilities' interim operation a year ago, and, after taking into consideration the utilities' safety improvements, we still find no undue risk in allowing the utilities to continue to operate the plants.

I want to assure you that the NRC staff closely scrutinizes the B&W-designed plants that have experienced significant events. For example, the Rancho Seco plant is presently shut down for incorporation of the modifications specified in the utility's Rancho Seco Action Plan for Performance Improvement. The NRC staff is performing an extensive review of the implementation of that plan. Before the Rancho Seco plant is restarted, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District will have installed a safety-grade emergency feedwater instrumentation and control system.

The NRC staff is continuing to review the petition of the Union of Concerned Scientists, and a formal decision on the requests as stated in the petition will be issued in the reasonably near future.

I trust that this information will assist you in responding to your constituents.

Sincerely,

Original signed by
Victor Stello

Victor Stello, Jr.
Executive Director
for Operations

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EDO No. 03030
V. Stello
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OGC-Bethesda
P. Shea
P. Noonan

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T. Murley/J. Sniezek
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SECY (3)
G. Dick (w/cy of incoming)
PD #4 Green Ticket File 03030

PD4 Reading File (w/cy of incoming)

*See Previous Concurrences:

PD4/LA*
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7/23/87

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7/24/87

DRNR
TMurley
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EDO
VStello
7/ /87

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

ACTION

EDC PRINCIPAL CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL

FROM: SEN. CARL LEVIN

DUE: 08/04/87

EDC CONTROL: 003030
DOC DT: 07/09/87
FINAL REPLY:

TO: CA

FOR SIGNATURE OF: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

** GREEN **

SECY NO: 87-0854

DESC: ENCL LTR FROM DR. & MRS. BOB MESSER SUPPORTING
UCS PETITION TO CLOSE DOWN ALL B&W PLANTS

ROUTING: MURRAY, OGC/B

DATE: 07/20/87
ASSIGNED TO: NRR CONTACT: MURLEY

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

NRR RECEIVED: JULY 21, 1987
ACTION: DRSP:CRUTCHFIELD

Calvo/Seigel

NRR ROUTING: MURLEY/SNIEZEK
STAROSTECKI
MIRAGLIA
FUNCHES
BLAHA
MOSSBURG

Done - 7/31

