



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

May 18, 1994

The Honorable Joseph Biden, Jr.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Biden:

On behalf of the Commission, I am writing to you concerning the NRC staff's decision on the restart of the Salem Unit 1 nuclear facility. The Commission shares your concerns about the past difficulties that the licensee has had in effecting improvements in performance over the past several years.

The decision to authorize plant restart after an event such as the one at Salem on April 7, 1994, resides with the NRC staff. The factors the staff considered in reaching that decision are summarized in the enclosure to the May 14, 1994 letter to you. This enclosure also summarizes their evaluation of the technical issues you raised in your May 11, 1994 letter.

The NRC staff has also taken a number of actions due to the concerns we have on Salem facility operations. For example, the public meeting on May 6, 1994, was held specifically to ensure a public airing of restart issues and licensee efforts to improve performance. Through the use of an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT), the staff has learned much about the technical problems leading to the April 7 event. Once the AIT's report is issued, the staff will determine what, if any, violations and enforcement activities need to be pursued. The event itself will continue to be evaluated to identify any generic technical implications. The NRC staff has established 24-hour per day on-site inspection coverage during startup. The staff will also be evaluating licensee performance to determine what additional special inspection activities may be necessary and appropriate at Salem.

Because of our concerns, and in order better to understand the restart issues and the licensee's actions to address them, the Commission took the extra step of holding a public Commission meeting with the licensee on May 9, 1994. During the meeting we

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heard directly from the licensee on recent personnel, organizational, and managerial changes, some implemented prior to the event, and we also received an independent assessment from our staff about those changes.

The Commission supports the NRC staff's decision concerning restart and is satisfied that the changes the licensee has made are well-founded; however, we will not be completely satisfied until those changes bear demonstrable and sustainable results.

The Commission is monitoring the staff's activities at Salem. We will ensure that our and your concerns are addressed.

Sincerely,



Ivan Selin