



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

June 11, 1979

Mr. Daniel Porta
Box 45 Shore Road
N. Edgecomb, ME 04556

Dear Mr. Porta:

This is in response to your letter of May 29 to Chairman Hendrie. You asked about the improvements made at Maine Yankee to bring it into compliance with NRC regulations. You are presumably referring to the order by the NRC on May 24, 1979, stating that the public health, interest or safety does not require the continued shutdown of the facility. In accordance with an NRC order of March 13, 1979 the facility had been shut down while certain safety-related piping systems were reanalyzed for their response to earthquakes. That reanalysis was completed satisfactorily, and modifications of two piping supports for the containment spray system were determined to be necessary. These modifications consisted of welding two stiffeners to each support base plate to reduce its flexibility. These modifications have been completed and are acceptable.

You also referred to a release of radioactive material from Maine Yankee during its shutdown. The Maine Yankee Atomic Power Company reported to the NRC on March 26 that, while in the process of establishing shutdown cooling on March 15, a gasket failed and 4,000 gallons of primary coolant sprayed into the containment spray building, with resulting gaseous activity released via the primary vent stack. The report stated that an offsite dose assessment indicated a whole body dose of less than 0.015 millirems. This is far below the permissible level. The report stated that repairs were made with a new gasket and bolting and, as an additional precaution, that the procedures were modified to isolate that particular portion of the system prior to the establishment of shutdown cooling.

You raised questions about the evacuation plan for Maine Yankee. The Maine Department of State Police is responsible for the preparation and implementation, if necessary, of emergency plans and evacuation plans in the State of Maine. Such plans have been prepared for the following towns surrounding the Maine Yankee site: Westport, Boothbay, Wiscasset, Edgecomb, and Woolwich. These plans should be available in the municipal offices of those towns. A Maine Yankee Emergency Plan submitted to the NRC by the Maine Yankee Atomic Power Company has been reviewed by the NRC and found to be acceptable; this plan should be in the Wiscasset Public Library.

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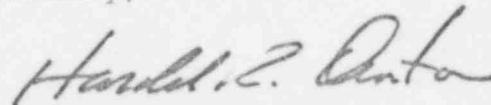
The NRC is charged with reviewing and concurring in State and local government radiological emergency response plans. To date, NRC concurrence has been given to plans of a dozen states, not including Maine. The Congress is presently considering whether such a State plan should be prerequisite for the issuance of an operating license for a nuclear power plant in the State.

With regard to your comments on the disposal of waste products from nuclear reactors, it is pertinent that a Report to the President by the Interagency Review Group on Nuclear Waste Management of March 1979 included the following in its technical findings on the disposal of high-level and transuranic wastes including plutonium:

"Successful isolation of radioactive wastes from the biosphere appears technically feasible for periods of thousands of years provided that the systems view is utilized rigorously to evaluate the suitability of sites and designs, to minimize the influence of future human activities and to select a waste form that is compatible with its host rock. Beyond a few thousand years and during the period of time in which actinides [includes plutonium] and long-lived fission products remain toxic, our capability to predict and therefore our assurance of successful isolation diminishes. Some uncertainties can be bounded or compensated for and, therefore, need not be resolved completely during repository construction. Although some residual uncertainty will always remain, reliance on conservative engineering practices and multiple barriers can compensate for a lack of total knowledge and predictive capability."

We appreciate your concerns and assure you that NRC is making every effort to protect the health and safety of the public at Maine Yankee and at all other nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,



Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

May 29, 1979

Dr. Joseph Hendrie
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dr. Hendrie;

As a resident of Maine living just across the Sheepscot River from Maine Yankee nuclear power plant I want information on the questions following and immediate action on the following demands.

I want to know exactly what improvements were made at Maine Yankee to bring it into compliance with NRC regulations? Why is it legal for a nuclear power plant to be able to have mishaps where radioactive materials are spewed into the air or water without having to immediately notify area residents and farmers of such incident? Maine Yankee recently had such a mishap during its shut down and no one was told. My wife and I eat vegetables grown in this area and drink milk from cows grazing within eyesight of this plant. For all you know you could be victim of such insanity yourself, considering cities import their food from farm areas where the utilities have seen fit to build these reactors.

Why is Maine Yankee being allowed to operate without an evacuation plan approved by your commission? The evacuation plan now maintained for this area is a liberal joke to residents. A five minute glance at an area map will quickly show the impossibility of safe evacuation of the peninsular area in event of a serious accident. On any summer weekend the traffic is backed up for miles from the influx of thousands of tourists to the Boothbay-Wiscasset area alone. Indeed the bridge from Wiscasset to the peninsula is known by locals as most unsafe right now. These facts alone are building a scenario too horrible to consider.

Now I am not an hysterical person. While I am concerned about a serious accident and want answers on the above issues, I am more concerned about the daily operation of the plant and what are termed "low-level" radiations. What exactly is low level radiation, how is it emitted, what radioactive particles are involved, over what radius of an area is affected by such radiation?

Maine Yankee's recent spill of iodine 131, and your commission's failure to notify the PEOPLE (pregnant woman and children) in this

area was a flagrant violation of the First Amendment right to life. This is illegal not to mention immoral. It represents total incompetency on the part of Maine Yankee and the NRC to operate in such an irresponsible manner. You are in a position of great responsibility, Dr. Hendrie; you cannot take it upon yourself to act so negligently. While you must act under great pressure from the utility and energy corporations, you must realize you are catering to the abuse of the people of this country by your weakness to stand up to these pressures.

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I want also to address recent correspondence you received from Robert M. Remy, Chairman, Executive Board Maine Merchants Association. Mr. Remy in his appeal to you for the reopening of Maine Yankee claims to represent the feelings of 1,200 area businesses and over 100,000 employees. This is an outrageous falsehood and great presumption on his part to make such a claim. I assure you not nearly so many individuals he claims to represent support his recently published letter to yourself.

In relation to the issue of nuclear power in general, I want to know what is the position of the NRC on the disposal of waste products from nuclear reactors now operating in the U.S? What are you planning to do with the 400-500 pounds of plutonium produced annually by these plants? Do you realize that at the present rate by the year 2020 we will have 30,000 tons of it? I don't know how old you will be then, Dr. Hendrie, but my children and your grandchildren will be in their teens. I'd prefer to present them with challenges other than heaps of plutonium that will be radioactive for 250,000 years. Do you understand that's 50 times longer than from the Egyptians to the present day? What kind of future planning is this madness?

In light of the above issues I must demand a reversal of your decision to reopen Maine Yankee. Dr. Hendrie, I want it shut down until there is a sane and logical and absolutely safe manner of producing electricity and responsible attitude adopted by yourself and the NRC on the above questions.

Daniel Forta

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Dr. Joseph Hendrie
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