



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555
June 11, 1979

Ms. Elizabeth G. Nowers
3 Sherman Street
Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538

Dear Ms. Nowers:

This is in response to your letter of May 25 to President Carter.

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 office 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.

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 about a dozen States, not including Maine. The Congress is presently considering whether such a State plan should be a prerequisite for the issuance of an operating license for a nuclear power plant in the State.

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.

With regard to your comment on the disposal of radioactive wastes, 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 high-level and transuranic wastes:

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"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 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 before selecting a site or constructing a repository. In addition, some will be resolved 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

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