NRC PDR

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

JUL 23 1979

Docket No. 50-309

Mr. McKie Wing Roth, Jr.
Designer
P. O. Box 50
Bath, Maine 04530

Dear Mr. Roth:

Thank you for your letter of June 25 regarding the escape of sponge rubber balls from the cooling system at Maine Yankee. These balls are a part of a system, called "Amertap", which is used at the station within the condenser cooling system to maintain the cleanliness of the condenser tubing surfaces. The Maine Yankee Nuclear Station uses a once through, or "open", cooling system wherein water from Montsweag Bay is passed through a condenser to condense the low pressure steam exiting from the turbine-generator. Over a period of time, marine organisms present in the Bay water tend to adhere to the tube walls and decrease the heat transfer capability of the condenser. The sponge rubber balls are periodically passed through the condenser to remove the biological fouling which has built up. When the Amertap cleaning system is in use the balls are added at the condenser inlet and should be captured by strainers at the condenser outlet. Some balls are lost during the cleaning operation. The licensee is currently looking at a possible design change to increase the recovery of balls.

Controls and barriers at the station for containment and control of radionuclides are indeed much more rigorous than controls attending to the non-hazardous Amertap sponge rubber balls for condenser cleaning. Therefore, the appearance of the Amertap balls should not be interpreted as evidence of inability to control release of radioactive contaminants.

I appreciate your calling this matter to my attention and hope that my answer is responsive to your concern.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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