



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

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SEP 7 1979


The Honorable J. Bennett Johnston  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnston:

As you requested, enclosed are responses to the four items in the attached letter of July 3, 1979 to you from Mr. and Mrs. Dana W. Hebert of Plaquemine, Louisiana, asking for a halt to construction of nuclear power plants currently being built in Louisiana.

We do not consider it necessary to stop construction of nuclear power plants at the present time because of any of these matters. We plan to continue to evaluate these and other aspects of nuclear power in order to ensure the continued protection of the public health and safety.

Sincerely,

 Original signed by R. G. Smith

Lee V. Gossick  
Executive Director for Operations

Enclosures:

1. Responses to ltr. from Mr. and Mrs. Dana W. Hebert dated July 3, 1979
2. Ltr. from Mr. and Mrs. Dana W. Hebert dated July 3, 1979

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Responses to the Four Items in a Letter of July 3, 1979  
to Senator Johnston from Mr. and Mrs. Dana W. Hebert

1. The Waterford nuclear Unit 3 will utilize a pressurized-water reactor designed by a different manufacturer than the pressurized-water reactors at Three Mile Island. The River Bend nuclear Units 1 and 2 will utilize boiling-water reactors. After the Three Mile Island accident, NRC immediately initiated a review of all operating plants of both types. The NRC has established several task forces to determine and apply the lessons learned from the Three Mile Island accident. These are recommending both short-term and long-term modifications of equipment, procedures, and training to be applied both to operating nuclear power plants and to those under construction.
2. As to radioactive waste, the NRC must be assured that wastes generated by licensed power reactors can be safely handled and stored as they are generated. As part of the licensing process for an individual power reactor facility, the NRC does review the facility in question in order to assure that the design provides for safe methods for interim storage of spent nuclear fuel. We can be reasonably confident that permanent disposal (as distinguished from continued storage under surveillance) can be accomplished safely when it is likely to become necessary. Reasonable progress towards the development of permanent disposal facilities is presently being accomplished. Under these circumstances a halt in licensing of nuclear power plants is not required to protect public health and safety.
3. The NRC currently requires that power reactor license applicants plan for radiological emergencies within their plant sites and make arrangements with State and local organizations to respond to accidents that might have consequences beyond the site boundary. To aid State and local governments in the development and implementation of adequate emergency plans, the NRC, in conjunction with seven other Federal agencies, has attempted, on a cooperative and voluntary basis, to provide for training and instruction of State and local government personnel and to establish criteria to guide the preparation of emergency plans. However, the NRC has not made NRC approval of State and local emergency plans a condition of nuclear power plant operation. The accident at Three Mile Island has raised a number of questions about the adequacy of radiological emergency response plans. The NRC is considering the adoption of additional regulations which will establish as conditions of power reactor operation increased emergency readiness for public protection in the vicinity of nuclear power reactors on the part of both the licensee and local and State authorities. Legislation on this subject is pending in Congress.

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4. As regard low-level radiation emissions from normally operating nuclear power plants, the NRC provides numerical guides for design objectives and limiting conditions for operation of nuclear power plants to meet the criterion of keeping levels of radioactive material in effluents to unrestricted areas as low as is reasonably achievable. For example, a design objective is that the calculated annual total quantity of all radioactive material above background to be released from each light-water-cooled nuclear power reactor to unrestricted areas will not result in an estimated annual dose or dose commitment from liquid effluents for any individual in an unrestricted area from all pathways of exposure in excess of 3 millirems to the total body or 10 millirems to any organ. Similarly, gaseous effluents released to the atmosphere should not result in an estimated annual external dose to any individual in unrestricted areas in excess of 5 millirems to the total body or 15 millirems to the skin. These figures may be compared with the average U. S. background dose of 102 millirems per year. The NRC has increased its studies of the potential health effects from exposure to low-level radiation. It is also working with the Environmental Protection Agency to develop preliminary plans for a broad program of epidemiological research on the subject, as directed by the NRC Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1979, signed into law on November 6, 1978.

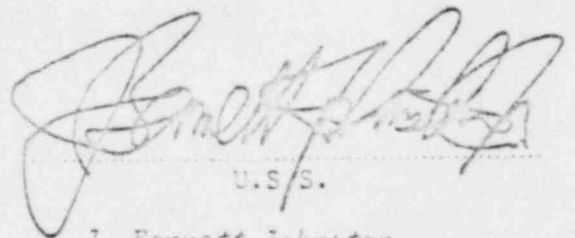
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United States Senate

Respectfully referred to:

Congressional Liaison  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D. C. 20555

Because of the desire of this office to be responsive to all inquiries and communications, your consideration of the attached is requested. Your findings and views, in duplicate form, along with return of the enclosure, will be appreciated by



U.S.S.

J. Bennett Johnston

Form #2

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