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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

ENERGY AND MINERALS
DIVISION

B-127945

The Honorable Joseph M. Hendrie
Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory
Commission

Dear Dr. Hendrie:

We have surveyed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's program for collecting and evaluating licensees' reports of unscheduled events. We found that the Commission needs to clearly define unscheduled event report assessment objectives, methods and responsibilities; and design procedural controls to insure that all safety-related problems are identified. The Commission also should extend its reporting requirements to types of events not now covered.

In our survey we also examined the issue of mandatory industry participation in the present voluntary system for reporting to the Commission minor mishaps and component failures at nuclear powerplants. The President has asked the Commission to mandate industry participation; but the Commission has not yet decided if the potential benefits outweigh the additional industry reporting burden--especially in view of the present duplication between the voluntary system and the Commission's licensee event report system. The Commission's staff recommends additional staff study of this issue. Although we believe it will be hard for the Commission to justify mandatory industry participation, we also believe that a full examination of the issue is warranted. An alternative to additional in-house study, which we favor, is to decide the issue using the Commission's rulemaking procedures.

We made this survey as part of our evaluation of the effectiveness of the Commission's regulatory activities as required by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5876).

This report contains recommendations to you on pages 12 and 20. As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the House Committee on Government Operations and

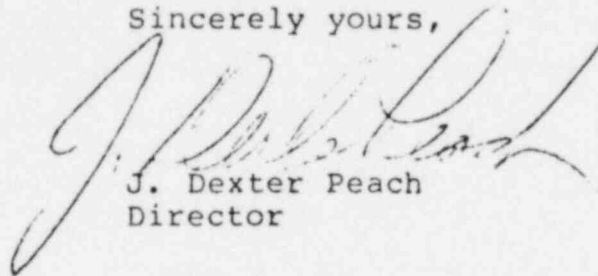
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the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not later than 60 days after the date of this report, and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

We are also sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees and the Office of Management and Budget.

The report has been discussed with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff and their comments incorporated as we believed appropriate.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Dexter Peach". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

J. Dexter Peach
Director