



OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER

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

May 14, 1980

MEMO TO: William J. Dircks
Acting Executive Director
for Operations
FROM: Peter A. Bradford

Can you explain the reference to a 1972 Westinghouse warning that is contained in these remarks by Dr. Pigford in a talk that he gave in Tennessee at the end of the last year?

Attachment:
As stated

cc: Chairman Ahearne
Commissioner Gilinsky
Commissioner Kennedy
Commissioner Hendrie
Samuel J. Chilk

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core damage. The significance of that event apparently was not recognized by NRC, although one individual in NRC did try to get it considered. It was recognized by someone in Babcock and Wilcox, but it did not get through the organization. It fell through the cracks. That really bothered our commission. Problems like this are one of the main sources of overgeneralizations about "attitudes" in the industry.

The Rasmussen report⁶ was an advance indicator that was not pursued by the industry or by NRC. The 1975 report concluded that small breaks had not been assessed adequately in terms of their importance to safety.

The Beznau incident five years ago in Switzerland showed a similar problem there. In 1972 Westinghouse had also foreseen this confusing situation of rising pressurizer level following a small break in the pressurizer. They notified NRC in a very thorough report. Apparently, NRC did not recognize the significance of this report. In fact, NRC in its own investigations since the accident apparently has not uncovered the Westinghouse warning. This was very disappointing to us. I have also learned that Westinghouse did indeed notify some of its clients, and the operators apparently were then properly trained.

The failure to follow-up on these advance indicators is the thing our commission focused on most clearly. Until we have a system that can treat all of these warnings as potential accidents, we have a faulty system. That is what our commission wanted to correct, but I believe we were not sufficiently explicit.

We should have identified specifically what is wrong so that errors could be corrected. There were indeed some equipment problems. The specific signal that triggers containment isolation apparently had not been treated carefully. Iodine filters were in bad condition. The letdown and vent system was leaky and, frankly, it

⁶Reactor Safety Study: An Assessment of Accident Risks in U.S. Commercial Nuclear Power Plants, WASH-1400 (Springfield, Virginia, National Technical Information Service) October 1975.