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U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
of the
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 1988

The Honorable Lando W. Zech, Jr.
Chairman
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you know, the Subcommittee has been investigating safety and economic problems posed to American workers and industries by substandard metal fasteners. You and your agency have been most responsive to the Subcommittee's concerns on this subject and deserve particular praise for Compliance Bulletin No. 87-02, which required testing of a cross-section of fasteners from the inventories of nuclear plants in operation or under construction.

The results of this survey have been received by the NRC and analyzed on at least a preliminary basis. The nonconformance rate of approximately 10 percent for fasteners in both safety and non-safety related applications is cause for serious concern. Accordingly, the Subcommittee has scheduled a public hearing for Thursday, June 16, 1988, to review this issue. Because of the preliminary nature of the analysis of the survey data, it would be premature to invite the Commissioners to testify as to what actions should be taken to address the fastener problem. I, therefore, invite appropriate NRC staff members to appear and testify before the Subcommittee.

The hearing will focus on several related questions, which I request be answered in the staff's prepared testimony.

- (1) How many of each type of nut and bolt were tested, subdivided into those designated for safety and non-safety applications?
- (2) How many of the fasteners in (1) were substandard, by total number and as a percentage of the total tested, and in what specific characteristic were they deficient?

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- (3) Were any of the deficiencies considered serious by the NRC staff in either the safety or non-safety fasteners and, if so, what were the fasteners and the deficiencies?
- (4) Specifically, what actions did the plants take on the 15 significantly out-of-specification fasteners, i.e.,
 - (a) were the remaining fasteners in the inventory scrapped? How many and how were they disposed of? If not, why not?
 - (b) If any were installed, were they tracked down and removed? Where were they installed?
 - (c) Please cite the bases for answering the above, i.e., NRC inspectors witnessed the destruction and/or removal? Plants merely stated that they did or provided documentation?
- (5) Were there any fasteners designated for safety-related applications that were deficient enough so as to constitute a potential safety threat in the judgment of the NRC staff? Please explain. In this analysis, please consider all potential uses for the particular fastener in the specific plant rather than simply reviewing the places where similar fasteners may have been installed at the time.
- (6) Were any of the fasteners designated for non-safety applications potentially deficient enough to cause equipment failure and/or threaten the safety of persons in the plants?
- (7) Are NRC's current regulations, including 10 C.F.R. 50, Appendix B, Criterion VIII, Identification and Control of Materials, Parts and Components, currently effective in assuring that licensees will accept only conforming fasteners and other materials or components?
- (8) Does the sampling methodology employed in Bulletin No. 87-02 allow the NRC to place any statistical probability on the results? Please elaborate.
- (9) Did all the laboratories engaged by the licensees perform the same tests in the same manner, or were there variations that made the data nonhomogeneous?
- (10) What have the licensees done with the nonconforming fasteners?

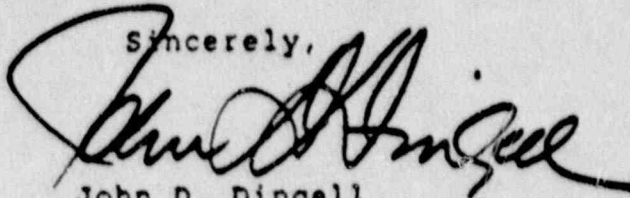
- (11) What specific instructions have been provided to NRC inspectors regarding the checking of fasteners? Have any written instructions been issued identifying the presence or absence of grade or manufacturer's marks? Have any vendors or manufacturers been specifically identified since January 1, 1986, as providers of fasteners whose quality is suspect?
- (12) In respect to question 10, if NRC has identified suppliers/manufacturers that have supplied nonconforming bolts, have these companies been referred to the Office of Investigations?
- (13) Has the Office of Investigations initiated any investigations involving fasteners since January 1, 1987? If so, please elaborate to the extent possible. If not, please describe the Office of Investigations' plans and how information from Supplement 1 of Bulletin 87-02 will be used.
- (14) Does the NRC plan to direct the nuclear plants to scrap or dispose of nonconforming bolts in their inventory despite the analyses saying they can be used?
- (15) What actions are the NRC staff contemplating or planning to deal with the nonconforming fasteners that are certainly installed in operating nuclear plants based on the survey?
- (16) Why does the NRC believe a temporary instruction (TI) will be useful, considering the history of the problem of fastener traceability?
- (17) Does the NRC plan to initiate a "get tough" policy that requires full compliance with fastener specification? If so, how? If not, why not?
- (18) Please identify all instances of material substitution problems encountered by operating nuclear power facilities or those under construction during the past five years.
- (19) Please identify all metal alloy sorting problems encountered by operating nuclear power facilities or those under construction during the past five years and specify whether or not they involved material substitution by vendors or inventory control problems within the facility.

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The hearing will convene at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2123 of the Rayburn House Office Building. As is customary, a written statement is requested. The statement may be of any reasonable length, but an oral summary of not more than 10 minutes is requested.

Twenty-five copies of the statement should be provided to the Subcommittee not later than the close of business on Tuesday, June 14. An additional 75 copies should be brought to the hearing room on June 16 for public distribution. The identities of the NRC staff members who will testify can be worked out between your staff and the Subcommittee staff. If there are any questions regarding the substance or the procedure of this hearing, please call Messrs. Stephen Sims or Thomas Dorney of the Subcommittee staff at 225-5365.

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Oversight and Investigations

cc: The Honorable Thomas J. Bliley, Jr.
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

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