

# YANKEE ATOMIC ELECTRIC COMPANY

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December 26, 1989

GLA 89-097  
FYC 89-018

OFFICE OF SECRETARY  
DOCKETING & SERVICE  
BRANCH

DOCKET NUMBER  
PROPOSED RULE PR 51  
(54FR 39765)

Secretary  
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555

Attention: Docketing and Service Branch

Subjects: Consideration of Environmental Impacts of Temporary Storage of Spent Fuel After Cessation of Reactor Operation (54FR39765) and Waste Confidence Review (54FR39767)

Dear Sir:

Yankee Atomic Electric Company (Yankee) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule changes to 10CFR, Part 51, regarding the environmental impacts of temporary storage of spent fuel after cessation of reactor operation and the five-year waste confidence review. Yankee owns and operates a nuclear power plant in Rowe, Massachusetts. Our Nuclear Services Division also provides engineering and licensing services for other nuclear power plants in the Northeast, including Vermont Yankee, Maine Yankee, and Seabrook.

The Edison Electric Institute/Utility Nuclear Waste and Transportation Program (EEI/UWASTE) has submitted comments in support of the Commission's review and proposed revision of the 1984 Waste Confidence Decision and the proposed revision to the regulations. Yankee is in basic agreement with EEI/UWASTE's assessment.

We endorse, in principle, the Commission's Proposed Finding 2. Firstly, the Proposed Finding 2 addresses the current schedular status of the mined geologic repository. The lack of a negotiator, delays in excavation of an exploratory shaft, delays in in-situ testing, and other factors have impacted and we expect will continue to impact this endeavor. The revised time period (first quarter of the twenty-first century) would appear to be more realistic.

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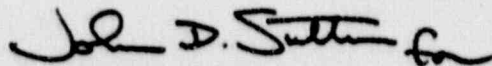
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Secondly, we agree with the Commission that current technology vis-a-vis an MRS and dry-cask storage can be used as an interim storage capability pending availability of the ultimate repository. Even with the anticipated renewal of the Operating Licenses of existing plants beyond their present 40-year terms, we believe appropriate provisions can be made to accommodate all anticipated spent fuel generation in a safe and timely manner. We believe that the current delays are primarily the result of program management and political problems. Certainly other countries with mature nuclear programs have demonstrated that the technical concerns of spent fuel disposal can be satisfactorily addressed.

We agree with the Commission's Proposed Finding 4 that spent fuel generated in any reactor can be stored on or off-site safely and without significant environmental impact for at least 100 years. There is adequate scientific evidence that 100 years is conservative and that storage for considerably longer periods can be safely accomplished.

Even though the Commission has only the responsibility to review and rule on DOE's license application for a repository or MRS facility, we encourage the Commission to do whatever it can to keep the process moving toward a successful implementation. In its review of the Waste Confidence Decision, the Commission proposes to change the review period from five to ten years because, "...predictions of repository availability are best expressed in terms of decades rather than years." It is our hope that the activities required to license the repository will proceed in an expeditious fashion and therefore the extension of the review period will not be necessary. Yankee is in the forefront of plant license renewal. Spent fuel disposal is not and should not be a technical constraint to plant license renewal.

Very truly yours,



D. W. Edwards  
Director, Industry Affairs

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