



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

January 31, 1994

The Honorable Carol Moseley-Braun
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1303

Dear Senator Moseley-Braun:

I am responding to your letter dated December 17, 1993, forwarding concerns of Mr. Walter Juds regarding the safety of commercial nuclear power plants in the United States. I would like Mr. Juds to be assured that the national debates on NAFTA, universal health care, and other issues have not distracted the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in any way from its focus on the safe operation of nuclear facilities. As an independent agency of the Federal Government, the NRC exercises its responsibilities with a minimum of interference from other policy issues or political influences.

The NRC continues to maintain close oversight of the operation of nuclear power plants. Regional offices throughout the country, including one in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, conduct a vigorous inspection program, and assign resident inspectors to each plant site. Any deviation from NRC regulations or from sound safety practice is evaluated and, in some cases, enforcement actions such as civil penalties ensue.

Operational problems are thoroughly evaluated to identify root causes and remedy them. The NRC also closely monitors the nuclear industry to identify trends in operational experience to determine whether new issues are emerging which raise the need for new regulations or requirements.

The safety record of each plant is evaluated on a regular basis in accordance with the agency's systematic assessment of licensee performance process. In some cases, a plant is identified as needing, and receives, increased regulatory attention until performance improves. In extreme cases, plants have been ordered to temporarily cease operation until problems are remedied. In no case is a nuclear plant in the United States allowed to operate, unless it meets the regulations of the NRC and operates in conformance with high safety standards.

Mr. Juds' letter raises a specific concern regarding the possibility of a Chernobyl type of accident in the United States. The NRC has taken major steps to minimize the circumstances that might lead to such an accident. Although the Three Mile Island (TMI) accident in 1979 damaged the reactor core, unlike the Chernobyl accident, the TMI accident did not result in a significant release of radiation to the public.

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As a result of TMI, the NRC placed numerous additional requirements on the design and operation of nuclear plants. One of the most significant actions taken by the NRC is the requirement for each plant to conduct a comprehensive design review, called an individual plant examination (IPE), to identify and remedy vulnerabilities to severe accidents. These improvements reduce the likelihood of a severe accident and improve the capability of the plants to cope with one if it were to happen. Moreover, major improvements have been made in our ability to evacuate the public or take other protective measures as necessary.

The NRC is dedicated to providing the level of oversight necessary to the safe operation of nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,

Original signed by
James M. Taylor

James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

DISTRIBUTION:

Central File (w/incoming)	TMurley/FMiraglia, 12G18
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*see previous concurrence

OFC: *SCSB/BC	*TECH ED.	*DSSA/DD	*DSSA/D	*ADT/NRR
NAME: RBarrett		MVirgilio	ATHadani	WRussell
DATE: 1/3/94	1/4/94	1/3/94	1/6/94	1/7/94

OFC: *NRR/DD	*NRR/D	D/EDO	EDO
NAME: FMiraglia	TMurley	JSniezek	JTaylor
DATE: / /94	1/14/94	/ /94	/ /94

OCA
✓ 1/31/94

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DOCUMENT NAME: GT9636

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ACT
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SCSB

• Reference
NORSA 1251 April '89
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• slides from Conish brief

ACTION

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM: DUE: 01/12/94

EDO CONTROL: 0009636
DOC DT: 12/17/93
FINAL REPLY:

Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun

TO:

Dennis Rathbun

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

** GRN **

CRC NO: 93-1142

Executive Director

DESC:

ROUTING:

ENCLOSES LETTER FROM WALTER JUDS EXPRESSING
CONCERNS ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF A NUCLEAR POWER
PLANT ACCIDENT

Taylor
Sniezek
Thompson
Blaha

DATE: 12/28/93

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NRR

Murley

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

Reply in duplicate and address envelope to
attention of John G. Buscher

WBR 5 (Priority Action)

NRR RECEIVED: DECEMBER 28, 1993

NRR ACTION: DSSA:THADANI

NRR ROUTING: TEM/FJM

WR
JC
DC
FG
NRR MAIL ROOM

ACTION

DUE TO NRR DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

BY *Jean* 7, 1994

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

PAPER NUMBER: CRC-93-1142 LOGGING DATE: Dec 27 93
ACTION OFFICE: EDO
AUTHOR: Carol Mosely-Braun
AFFILIATION: U.S. SENATE
ADDRESSEE: Dennis Rathbun
LETTER DATE: Dec 17 93 FILE CODE:
SUBJECT: Constituent's concerns regarding possibility of an
accident at a U.S. Nuclear Power plant
ACTION: Direct Reply
DISTRIBUTION: OCA to Ack.
SPECIAL HANDLING: None
CONSTITUENT: Walter Juds
NOTES:
DATE DUE: Jan 11 94
SIGNATURE: . DATE SIGNED:
AFFILIATION: