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FEB 28 1994

Docket No. 50-271

Mr. Donald A. Reid
Vice President, Operations
Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
RD 5, Box 169
Ferry Road
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

Dear Mr. Reid:

SUBJECT: VERMONT YANKEE, SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF LICENSEE
PERFORMANCE (SALP) REPORT NO. 50-271/92-99

This letter forwards the Vermont Yankee SALP report (Enclosure 1) for the period August 2, 1992, to January 15, 1994. This assessment was conducted under the new SALP process that the NRC implemented on July 19, 1993. The new SALP process rates licensees in four functional areas: operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support. The plant support area comprises radiological and effluent controls, chemistry, security, emergency preparedness, fire protection, and housekeeping.

Management demonstrated a good overall safety perspective with generally strong oversight and involvement in plant activities. Improved performance was noted in the radiation protection and security subareas of plant support. The well-trained and knowledgeable plant staff continues to be a strength. The independent review organizations provided effective, critical review of site activities, and the line organization more effectively and aggressively responded to their findings. Recent Vermont Yankee initiatives have been effective in improving self-assessment, communications, corrective actions, procedural adherence, and use of industry operating experience.

Continued management attention is needed to resolve concerns over the effectiveness of the Vermont Yankee corrective action processes and resolution of longstanding deficiencies. In addition, continued emphasis is needed on comprehensive work controls and proper procedural adherence, as evidenced by the September 1993 fuel handling errors and several examples of technical weaknesses in maintenance procedures and controls during this SALP period.

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The operations rating declined to Category 2. Management needs to address weaknesses in interpretations of the Technical Specifications which led to degraded safety equipment, and in their approach to assessment and correction of longstanding deficiencies of low safety significance that represent distractions to operators. There were improvements in operator training, and overall good planning during the Fall 1993 refueling outage, although fuel handling at the beginning of the outage was a significant exception. A lesson learned from the fuel handling errors is that management should assure that repetitive, relatively routine activities are conducted with a rigor and oversight commensurate with their safety significance.

The maintenance rating also declined to Category 2. Overall performance in this area resulted in safe plant operations, including no plant transients caused by either maintenance or testing, and the material condition of the plant remained very good. Excellent staff skill and qualifications were demonstrated, and work backlogs and emergent problems were well managed. However, ineffective control of work and technically inadequate procedures caused problems with safety equipment. The design basis of the plant was also compromised by inadequately evaluated work and poorly controlled contractors. Weaknesses were evident in establishing the scope of certain testing, test baselines, acceptance criteria, trending results and - most significantly - causal analysis of discrepancies.

Engineering was also rated Category 2. The NRC found that, in general, the licensee's performance has been very good in those areas in which it places more emphasis. The knowledge and experience of the engineering staff and effective communications among the licensee's organizations contributed to that high-quality performance. Technical quality of design products has been high, contributing significantly to safe operation. However, noteworthy weaknesses which had not received significant licensee attention included the lack of a testing program for safety-related systems for which the TS do not specify test requirements. This issue is of particular concern because it bears on the assurance of the reliability of those systems to perform as expected.

Plant support was rated Category 1. Significant improvement in security was attributed largely to strong management involvement. Communications between licensee management and a new security contractor were good, overtime problems were resolved and guard force training was greatly improved. Strong performance in radiation protection continued to improve due, in part, to excellent coverage of work activities and numerous as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA) program improvements. Very low total dose and minimal contaminated floor space were achieved. Excellent surveys and postings clearly defined work boundaries. Management support for the emergency preparedness program was evident in their assurance of operationally-ready response facilities, effective independent audits, and strong training. Performance during two emergency exercises was excellent, with effective governmental interaction.

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We have scheduled a management meeting with you, open for public observation, at 10:00 a.m. on March 9, 1994, at the Vernon Town Hall. At the meeting, you should be prepared to discuss our assessment and any initiatives you plan to take to address the weaknesses detailed in our evaluation.

We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Thomas T. Martin
Regional Administrator

Enclosure: SALP Report No. 50-271/92-99

cc w/encl:

R. Wanczyk, Plant Manager
J. Thayer, Vice President, Yankee Atomic Electric Company
L. Tremblay, Senior Licensing Engineer, Yankee Atomic Electric Company
J. Gilroy, Director, Vermont Public Interest Research Group, Inc.
D. Tefft, Administrator, Bureau of Radiological Health, State of New Hampshire
Chief, Safety Unit, Office of the Attorney General, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
R. Gad, Esquire
G. Bisbee, Esquire
R. Sedano, Vermont Department of Public Service
T. Rapone, Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety
The Chairman
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Remick
Commissioner de Planque
Institute for Nuclear Power Operations (INPO)
Public Document Room (PDR)
Local Public Document Room (LPDR)
Nuclear Safety Information Center (NSIC)
K. Abraham, PAO (30 copies)
NRC Resident Inspector
State of New Hampshire, SLO Designee
State of Vermont, SLO Designee
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, SLO Designee

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bcc w/encl:

Region I Docket Room (with concurrences)

E. Kelly, DRP

J. Shedlosky, DRP

M. Oprendeck, DRP

J. Callan, NRR

SALP Program Manager, DRIL, NRR (2)

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V. McCree, OEDO

D. Dorman, NRR

W. Butler, NRR

M. Shannon, ILPB

J. Taylor, EDO

W. Russell, NRR

V. McCree, OEDO

J. Lieberman, OE

W. Scott, NRR/RPEB

bcc via E-Mail:

Region I Staff (Refer to SALP Drive)

*rec'd w/ NRR concurrence (incl. Tech. Editor)
2/18 Martin/Kane
comments incorporated.*

HQ:NRR

DMK

Dorman/meo
2/10/94

RI:DRP

AKK
Kelly
2/10

RI:DRP

LF
Lihville
2/22

RI:DRSS

CH
Hehl

RI:DRP

JW 2/22
Wiggins

~~RI:DRA~~

~~Lanning~~

RI:DRA

AK
Kane
2/10/94

RI:RA

Martin
2/28/94

Comments incorporated from 2/16

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