

DDK



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

March 10, 1994

CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Walter J. Hickel
Governor of the State of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Dear Governor Hickel:

Thank you for your letter of January 19, 1994, regarding cooperation with Russia on environmental issues. The Commission appreciates your support of NRC's activities in nuclear safety assistance and cooperation with the countries of the former Soviet Union.

We also recognize that Alaskans are concerned about the safety of the small channel-type graphite-moderated reactors at Bilibino in the northeast corner of the Russian Federation. This reactor is considered part of the system of nuclear power plants that will eventually become linked by the integrated communications network that we are helping the Russians set up to speed reports of anomalous incidents to their regulatory authority, the Gosatomnadzor. NRC officials were in Russia last month to examine the feasibility of transferring low-cost communications equipment to Russia to improve its ability to inform the Russian regulator as well as the outside world of any serious accident occurring at a Russian nuclear power plant. Russia is a party to the Emergency Notification Convention negotiated shortly after the Chernobyl accident. I believe their cooperation in notification of nuclear incidents since signing this convention has been much improved.

In terms of priority for near-term risk reduction measures, it is U.S. policy to treat the most dangerous plants first, and we have judged these to be the large RBMK facilities at Leningrad, Kursk, and Smolensk. Second priority will be given to the older VVER 440/230 facilities at Kola and Novovoronezh. As a smaller reactor, Bilibino would probably follow these reactors.

The Commission also appreciates your invitation to observe your table-top emergency response drill next spring. We anticipate that one or two members of the NRC staff will attend.

Sincerely,

Ivan Selin
Ivan Selin

170086

9403210065 940310
PDR ORG NRCC
PDR

DF02