

Central
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SEP 7 1982

The Honorable Paul E. Tsongas
United States Senator
J.F.K. Federal Building
Room 2003F
Government Center
Boston, Massachusetts 02203

Dear Senator Tsongas:

I am pleased to respond to your letter of August 23, 1982, which expressed your continued concern for the safety condition of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station, particularly with regard to providing 24 hour inspectors at the facility. As you noted, these concerns have been previously expressed by State Representative Peter Forman in a recent letter to NRC Chairman Palladino.

Mr. Ronald Haynes, Regional Administrator for NRC's Region I Office, has responded to Representative Forman's inquiry on behalf of Chairman Palladino; a copy of this response is enclosed for your information. As explained in Mr. Haynes' letter, we have not changed our view with regard to not providing 24 hour inspection coverage at Pilgrim. The present mix of region-based and resident inspectors in our view provides the most efficient use of our resources.

I hope that the information provided in Mr. Haynes' response to Representative Forman is helpful in understanding the NRC's position with regard to the inspection program at the Pilgrim Station. If I can be of further assistance on this matter, please feel free to contact me or any member of my staff.

Sincerely,

(Signed) William J. Dircks

William J. Dircks
Executive Director for
Operations

Enclosure: As Stated

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

AUG 30 1982

The Honorable Peter Forman
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts House
of Representatives
55 Warren Avenue
Plymouth, Massachusetts 02360

Dear Mr. Forman:

Thank you for your August 5, 1982 letter to Chairman Palladino and for the confidence you expressed in the NRC. As the Region I Administrator, responsible for resident and region-based NRC inspection activities in the Northeast, your request has been referred to me for a response.

The NRC shares your dedication for assuring protection of the health and safety of the people living near Boston Edison's Pilgrim Station. I recognize that many people living near nuclear power plants have heightened concerns about safety, particularly since the accident at Three Mile Island. Moreover, these concerns are exacerbated in situations such as at Pilgrim Station where NRC highlighted management problems involving the plant owner's compliance with safety regulations. Because of this, I and members of my staff established contact with the Plymouth Board of Selectmen last January so that we could keep these local leaders informed of the problems at Pilgrim Station. I have met with various Board members and this office continues to furnish periodic written reports to the Board and other officials. These reports summarize the results of NRC inspections at Pilgrim Station as well as the status and progress made by the Boston Edison Company in their program to upgrade their management controls and improve their compliance with NRC regulations. This performance improvement program by Boston Edison Company undergoes continuing review by this office. Our inspectors and regional management evaluate the effectiveness of the program by monitoring the results achieved.

With respect to your request about the assignment of NRC inspectors, we augmented our inspection program after identification of the compliance problems but decided not to adopt round-the-clock inspector coverage. We believe the augmented program is a better overall approach and achieves the results that we both desire. The augmented program involves the assignment of two resident inspectors at Pilgrim Station instead of one inspector which is our present policy for single unit sites. These two inspectors are normally on day shift when most maintenance, testing and other activities are in progress. However, they stagger and extend their work hours during periods when extensive maintenance and testing activities are conducted on off-shifts. In addition, we intensified our utilization of specialist inspectors from their office at Pilgrim Station. They will conduct several inspections in the coming months to supplement the resident inspection program. Twenty-seven such specialist inspections were conducted during the period September 1, 1981 to June 30, 1982. Each specialist inspection usually involved two or more specialists for periods of three to four days.

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We have found that this mix of regional based and resident inspections provides the most effective use of our inspection resources. Moreover, by utilizing a cadre of region-based inspectors, we have additional flexibility in providing extra coverage of problem areas, we are able to efficiently employ inspectors having a high degree of knowledge and experience in rather narrow fields of technical expertise, and we obtain a continuing fresh look at licensee performance through the eyes of many different inspectors.

Regarding public notification of emergencies at the plant, state and licensee emergency procedures require the onsite person in charge of plant operations to inform federal, state and local officials of abnormal or emergency situations at the facility and to make recommendations to those officials so that appropriate action can be taken to protect public health and safety should an emergency occur. The NRC has an active role in assuring that significant events are properly evaluated and reported. Our inspectors review each significant event to assure that it was indeed properly evaluated by the licensee and reported. Furthermore, a system has been established within the NRC to collect and independently evaluate each significant event as it is reported on a 24-hour basis. Any event that could impact public health and safety would result in the activation of NRC regional and headquarters emergency response centers. Furthermore, the assigned resident inspectors and resident inspectors from nearby facilities would be dispatched to the site in such situations. It is our standard practice to independently notify State officials of those events with more than minor significance. In addition, depending on the severity of the event, a Region I response team including myself would be dispatched to the site.

I hope the above information is helpful in understanding the NRC's position regarding the inspection program and emergency notification procedures at the Pilgrim Station. If I or my staff can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:

Ronald C. Haynes
Regional Administrator