



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
475 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-1415

April 11, 1994

Docket No. 50-271

Nat Hendricks
P.O. Box 738, Main Street
Putney, VT 05346-0738

Dear Mr. Hendricks:

I am responding to your letter dated March 10, 1994 in which you expressed concern about potential radioactive contamination of the sewage sludge at the Putney municipal sewage facility from the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant. You stated that the Putney municipal solid waste sewage sludge is stored in an open pit approximately 31 feet from your property and is close to the public library, two music schools and other residences. You also stated that there is cobalt-60 and other radioactive material in the sewage sludge at Vernon, Vermont and asked what would prevent similar contamination of the sewage sludge at the Putney facility.

Relative to your first question, I assume that you are referring to the contaminated sewage sludge from the sewage facility owned and operated by the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation at the Vermont Yankee Power Plant site. This sewage facility is for use only by the power plant site and is not a municipal system. Samples of sludge from this sewage facility have shown small amounts of radioactive material in the past. The majority of the radioactivity in the sludge is believed to have come from small spills (or other spread of radioactive contamination) within the plant that were mopped up and the contaminated mop water inadvertently disposed to the onsite sanitary sewer system, rather than to the radioactive waste handling system as intended. Personnel exiting contaminated areas are checked for clothing and personal contamination, so the potential for carrying such contamination to their residences is very small and of negligible safety consequence, due to the very small amounts of radioactivity that might be carried off site.

Release of the small amount of radioactive material that ended up in the sewage sludge from the Vermont Yankee sewage facility has been evaluated by the licensee and reviewed by the NRC. This evaluation has shown that the small amount of radioactive material found in the sewage sludge would have negligible safety consequences to the public. Disposal of this sludge has been formally approved by the NRC in accordance with federal regulations contained in 10 CFR Part 20.

The onsite sewage facility at Vermont Yankee should not be compared to a facility such as the Putney municipal solid waste facility. For the reasons stated above, the sewage facility on the power plant site has a much higher potential for small amounts of radioactive

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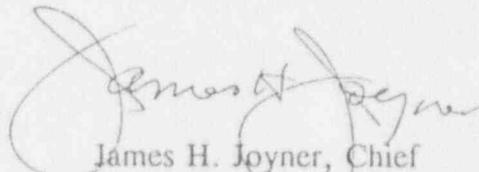
contamination to be present than do the municipal sewage systems in the nearby communities.

In response to your second question, the NRC does not have any information that the municipal sewage sludge contains radioactive contamination in either Vernon or Putney. However, since neither of those municipal systems is connected to the Vermont Yankee plant, other than as discussed below, it is very unlikely that radioactive contamination from Vermont Yankee is in the sludge from either of those municipal sewage treatment plants.

Relative to your third question, the NRC has provided and continues to provide oversight and enforcement activities to ensure that NRC licensees, including Vermont Yankee, control and minimize releases of radioactive materials in accordance with NRC regulations and guidelines. As stated in your letter, the assumed pathway for radioactive material to be in the municipal sewage sludge is from Vermont Yankee employees, visitors, and contract workers who may reside or stay in motels or other housing in the town of Putney. It is possible that some very small amounts of radioactive material could come from Vermont Yankee Power Plant workers showering, washing clothing, and bodily excretions while in local residences, motels, etc. However, because of the reasons provided above in our response to your first question, the amount of radioactivity in the municipal sewage system from this source would be insignificant and would not have an effect on people living near the sewage sludge.

I hope that we have answered your questions and addressed your concerns. If you have further questions concerning the storage of the Putney municipal sewage sludge, I recommend that you contact the officials for the town of Putney or the Vermont Health Department. If you should need any further information concerning the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant, please contact Robert Bores, Ph.D., of my staff at (610) 337-5213.

Sincerely,



James H. Joyner, Chief
Facilities Radiological Safety
and Safeguards
Division of Radiation Safety
and Safeguards

cc:

Richard Fletcher, Putney Health Officer, RR4, Box 360, Putney, VT 05346
Ray McCandless, Vermont Health Department, State of Vermont
Governor Howard Dean, 109 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05609
Congressman Bernie Sanders, 213 Cannon, Washington, DC 20515

ACTION

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM: DUE: 04/²²15/94

EDO CONTROL: 0009932
DOC DT: 03/22/94
FINAL REPLY:

Rep. Bernie Sanders

TO:

OCA

FOR SIGNATURE OF : ** GRN **

CRC NO: 94-0292

Executive Director

DESC:

ROUTING:

ENCLOSES LETTER FROM NAT HENDRICKS CONCERNING
REPORTS OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL IN SEWAGE SLUDGE
FROM VERMONT YANKEE

Taylor
Milhoan
Thompson
Blaha
TMartin, RI
Bernero, NMSS

DATE: 03/31/94

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NRR

Russell

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

No record in SECY or EDO of the 3/10/94 letter from
Nat Hendricks

NRR RECEIVED: APRIL 1, 1994
NRR ACTION: DRPE:VARGA

NRR ROUTING: RUSSELL/MIRAGLIA
REYES
THADANI
CRUTCHFIELD
GILLESPIE
NRR MAIL ROOM

<u>ACTION</u>
DUE TO NRR DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
BY <u>April 12, '94</u>

4/22/94

