

August 28, 1995

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. 50-271/95-99

This letter forwards the Vermont Yankee SALP report (Enclosure 1) for the period January 16, 1994, to July 15, 1995. This assessment was conducted under the current SALP process that the NRC implemented on July 19, 1993. The 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. As a result of our review, Enclosure 2 is our tentative inspection plan for the subsequent SALP period which does not include (routine) resident core inspection procedures.

During this period, continued strengths at Vermont Yankee (VY) included: strong management oversight and involvement in plant activities; knowledgeable plant staff; critical reviews of activities by the off-site review committee and by the quality assurance organization. Corrective actions were effective for the September 1993 errors with fuel handling. The licensee conducted a thorough review of infrequently performed tasks during the Spring 1995 refueling outage, resulting in beneficial oversight and controls. Late in the period, the off-site review committee and the independent assessment of the Motor Operated Valve program provided useful, outside insights for improved performance. A weakness was noted during the period in the depth of review by the on-site review committee, although recent improvements have been noted.

The newly initiated self-assessment program within departments has had a positive effect on focusing management's attention on opportunities for performance enhancements. Further, the new site-wide Event Reporting System (ERS), developed from extensive review of industry experience, was a significantly improved process. Although the frequency and quality of events identified under the new ERS reflected an improved questioning attitude within the organization, the ERS has only been in-place for the last four months of the assessment period and is therefore too new to measure its overall effectiveness.

While recent improvements were noted, continued management attention is warranted in two areas: one, oversight of the on-site review committee safety review responsibilities and two, ERS root cause/trending analysis to assure effective implementation of programs and policies.

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The operations area continued to be rated Category 2. Operations exhibited significant improvements in several areas over this SALP period, effectively addressing most of the weaknesses highlighted in the last SALP period. Operator performance continued at a high level and was effective in ensuring safe plant operations. The Operations Department improved its identification of problems and generally was effective in preventing recurrence. Although the Licensed Operator Requalification Training program exhibited significant weaknesses early in the SALP period, strong and aggressive management attention resulted in significant improvements by the end of the period. However, noteworthy examples of ineffective response to identified problems existed that detracted from otherwise excellent performance by operations. Problems with the interpretation of Technical Specifications continued during the period, although they were less frequent and generally of lesser safety significance.

The maintenance area also continued to be rated Category 2. Management implemented a number of good initiatives to enhance the interface with operations, scheduling and planning, and safety review aspects of maintenance but some noteworthy exceptions to good performance were noted. Vermont Yankee increased the use of self-assessments and industry experience information to improve maintenance and testing programs. Further, industry representatives from outside the company were effectively used to enhance the quality of these programs. Many examples of well planned and executed maintenance and surveillance activities over the period were directly attributable to the qualifications and experience of maintenance and testing personnel. However, when unsatisfactory results were obtained from initial testing, the loss of information about "as-found" conditions was identified as a weakness. Further, inconsistent evaluation of trending data resulted in some equipment degradation or failures that may have been preventable. Notwithstanding equipment problems and personnel errors impacting plant operations, the overall material condition of the plant was very good. Although maintenance and surveillance programs were generally good, certain programs had isolated weaknesses.

The engineering area continued to be rated Category 2. Performance in the engineering area continued to be good. Engineering management oversight and attention provided generally positive results. Weaknesses from the prior SALP were addressed with improvements noted in areas such as self-assessment and system testing. Design activities, engineering evaluations and analyses were generally very well done. However, several problems were noted in the plant's conformance with 10 CFR Part 50 Appendix R. Also, significant weaknesses were identified in Operations and Engineering management's oversight of the motor-operated valve testing program that were being addressed by the licensee at the end of the period.

The plant support area continued to be rated Category 1. Overall, the plant support functions substantially contributed to safe plant performance. Already strong performance continued in the radiation protection area including the As Low As is Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) program, and environmental and effluent monitoring. There was continued excellent performance in the emergency preparedness and security areas. Strong performance in fire protection program implementation and in housekeeping was noted.

Mr. Donald A. Reid

3

We have scheduled a management meeting with you, open for public observation, at 10:00 a.m. on September 12, 1995, 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: William F. Kane

Thomas T. Martin
Regional Administrator

Docket No. 50-271

Enclosures:

1. SALP Report No. 50-271/95-99
2. Inspection Schedule for next SALP period

cc w/encl:

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J. Thayer, Vice President, Yankee Atomic Electric Company
J. Duffy, Licensing Engineer, Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
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
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Mr. Donald A. Reid

4

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