

April 8, 1996

Sandra Gavutis, Executive Director  
C-10 Research and Education Foundation, Inc.  
44 Merrimac Street  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Ms. Gavutis:

This letter responds to your press release dated March 13, 1996, regarding the performance of Seabrook Station relative to a containment ventilation release that was monitored and controlled in conformance with NRC regulatory requirements. This release had no public health and safety consequence or adverse impact on the environment. We are providing a formal response since your press release did not include explanations previously provided to you by the NRC and because the press release questioned the integrity and motivation of our organization. We are unaware of the basis for your statement that there were "revelations of collusion between the NRC and the reactor operators." We take this statement seriously and urge you to report any evidence or information that you have that supports this contention to our Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-233-3497.

Our review of the circumstances found that on November 29, 1995, at 2:27 a.m. while performing a planned containment purge in support of refueling activities, the Seabrook Station Wide Range Gas Monitor (WRGM) experienced a power supply failure. The WRGM is an instrument that is normally used to monitor gaseous releases from the plant. The power supply was replaced and the WRGM was placed back in service at 4:05 p.m. that same day. In such conditions, the licensee is required to implement compensatory measures as specified by the applicable Technical Specifications. In this case, the licensee conformed with the applicable Technical Specifications, initiated sampling and radiological analysis of the effluent stream, and calculated the consequent dose to the public. The upstream process radiation monitors, which were in service, provided a supplemental means to assess radiological conditions while the WRGM was out of service. The gaseous effluent that was released was both filtered and monitored. The calculated organ dose due to the release was a small fraction of regulatory limits. Under these conditions, there was no federal regulatory requirement for the licensee to inform the NRC or the public relative to this matter.

Our resident inspector received a request on January 25, 1996, from your organization, to supply information pertaining to meteorological conditions and the nature of radiological releases that occurred on November 29, 1995, from approximately 2:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. As previously explained by our resident inspector, the information you sought was archived by the licensee and was not readily available. The inspector provided an estimate of the time required to access and retrieve the information, and indicated that other NRC regulatory activities had priority and would prevent a prompt response to your

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request. Notwithstanding, the inspector kept your organization informed of the status of the request and committed that he would follow up with your organization upon completion of his other more safety significant assignments. We believe that our efforts were appropriately prioritized from a safety standpoint and therefore sufficiently responsive.

While we support the concept of your independent environmental monitoring efforts, we recognize the ability and responsibility of designated state agencies to validate and verify environmental information, data, conditions, and impacts. Accordingly, we encourage your organization to communicate your data and results with the appropriate state agencies.

Our continuing inspection program at Seabrook provides the basis for our confidence in the quality of the licensee performance relative to providing for public health and safety and protection of the environment. There are numerous regulatory requirements relative to effluent and environmental controls that are imposed and enforced by the NRC. In order to maintain the operating license for the facility, the licensee must perform in accordance with these regulatory specifications.

These specifications include the establishment, implementation, and maintenance of a radiological environmental monitoring program, which includes monitoring, sampling, and analysis of the atmospheric contaminants (air particulates and radioiodines), aquatic environment and life-forms (including various fish, mussels, and lobsters), terrestrial environment and vegetation, sediment, surface water and groundwater. The quality and performance of this program is routinely inspected by the NRC, and the data (which is reported on an annual basis and available to the public, copy attached) is independently evaluated and assessed.

We also inspect and verify the quality of the licensee's program for monitoring and controlling effluent releases to the environment. Based on our continuing efforts, we maintain confidence in the ability of the licensee to monitor, measure, and control radiological releases, and assess resultant exposure to the public in accordance with regulatory requirements. Additionally, the NRC maintains a network of thermoluminescent dosimetry (TLD) devices (as does the State of New Hampshire) that are used to independently confirm the licensee's assessment of dose impact to the public. The licensee's effluent reports and NRC's environmental dosimetry results are available to the public.

Your press release also questioned whether the recent "downsizing" at Seabrook compromised the health and safety of the public. The NRC performance and safety based inspection program continues to confirm the safe operation of Seabrook Station. Our assessment indicates that the licensee is operating the Seabrook facility in a manner that does not endanger the health and safety of the public and is protective of the environment. We have observed no change in performance or ability as a result of staffing changes.

Sandra Gavutis

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We hope that this letter is responsive to your concerns. If you have any other questions in this area, I invite you to contact Mr. John Rogge of my staff at 610-337-5146.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by:

Thomas T. Martin  
Regional Administrator

Attachment: North Atlantic's Annual Radioactive Effluent Release Report

cc w/ cy of press release:  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State of New Hampshire

Sandra Gavutis

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Distribution w/ cy of press release:

L. Norton, OIG  
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