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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

CHAIRMAN

February 9, 1999

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lieberman:

I am writing to keep you informed about the status of the Millstone nuclear plants. The overall plant performance at Millstone Unit 3 since its restart in July 1998 has been generally typical of a plant returning to service after a lengthy shutdown. Five events have occurred which resulted in the removal of Unit 3 from service (one planned shutdown, three manual trips, and one automatic trip). No abnormalities were observed either during the transients or during plant recovery. The overall risk significance of these plant shutdowns was low and plant operators responded well to the challenges, exhibiting conservative decisionmaking and deliberate efforts to ensure safety and compliance with procedural requirements. Licensee management has initiated an assessment of the number and severity of challenges facing the plant operations staff since the return to power operations. Recognition on the part of senior licensee management of the need for increased attention to this area, as well as to the reduction of existing operator burdens, is reflected in its recent initiative to provide a renewed "operational focus" to all activities and decisions affecting the unit.

In NRC Inspection Report 50-423/98-05, dated January 7, 1999, the NRC staff addressed the multiple plant trips and stated that the licensee's response to these trips confirmed proper operator response to the plant and equipment challenges. The NRC staff further stated that continued licensee management attention must be directed toward reducing the backlog of equipment problems and other issues that have the potential to create future operational challenges to the Millstone Unit 3 operations staff. The NRC staff plans to continue increased regulatory oversight at Millstone Unit 3 until the plant establishes and maintains the appropriate level of safety performance.

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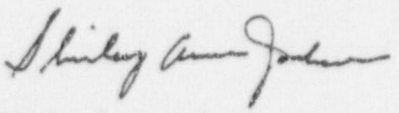
On January 4, 1999, water containing low levels of tritium and trace amounts of other radionuclides (a total of approximately 0.0217 curies) leaked out of the Millstone Unit 3 waste test tank before the licensee could isolate the leak. Heavy rain at that time carried the slightly contaminated water to Niantic Bay. A berm, which was designed to retain any water leaking from the tank, failed to contain the leak. The tritium release was diluted in Niantic Bay and doses were evaluated based on fish and seafood consumption, as well as recreational use of the Bay. The dose is well below radiation dose design objectives for maintaining effluent releases as low as reasonably achievable in accordance with Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50. (The doses to a member of the public calculated to result from the release of this radioactivity would be 2.2×10^{-10} rem, as compared to the public dose limit from licensed activities, 0.1 rem, found in 10 CFR 20.1301.) As is the situation with marine sites, we did not include the drinking water pathway in this estimate. The licensee has investigated why the berm did not contain the leak and has lined the berm with an impermeable membrane. After the appropriate analysis

was performed on the remaining water in the waste test tank, the contents (more than 15,000 gallons) were released to Niantic Bay through the normal release path, which is a normal evolution at the plant and allowed under NRC regulations.

With regard to Millstone Unit 2, the staff is utilizing NRC Inspection Manual Chapter (IMC) 0350, "Staff Guidelines for Restart Authorization," as a guide for plant restart. As part of its execution of IMC 0350, the staff developed a Restart Assessment Plan to capture the NRC actions required before the NRC approves plant restart. The results of the NRC inspections and the status of Millstone Unit 2 plant readiness have been, and will continue to be, discussed at periodic public meetings in the vicinity of the Millstone site. The last such meeting was held on January 11, 1999. During the meeting, the staff answered questions from members of the public regarding many aspects of NRC regulatory oversight.

I assure you that a Commission decision authorizing the restart of Millstone Unit 2 will be made only when the Commission is satisfied that the conditions that led to the extended shutdown have been corrected to our satisfaction, regardless of the length of time that process may take. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Shirley Ann Jackson

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

CHAIRMAN

February 9, 1999

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dodd:

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In NRC Inspection Report 50-423/98-05, dated January 7, 1999, the NRC staff addressed the multiple plant trips and stated that the licensee's response to these trips confirmed proper operator response to the plant and equipment challenges. The NRC staff further stated that continued licensee management attention must be directed toward reducing the backlog of equipment problems and other issues that have the potential to create future operational challenges to the Millstone Unit 3 operations staff. The NRC staff plans to continue increased regulatory oversight at Millstone Unit 3 until the plant establishes and maintains the appropriate level of safety performance.

On January 4, 1999, water containing low levels of tritium and trace amounts of other radionuclides (a total of approximately 0.0217 curies) leaked out of the Millstone Unit 3 waste test tank before the licensee could isolate the leak. Heavy rain at that time carried the slightly contaminated water to Niantic Bay. A berm, which was designed to retain any water leaking from the tank, failed to contain the leak. The tritium release was diluted in Niantic Bay and doses were evaluated based on fish and seafood consumption, as well as recreational use of the Bay. The dose is well below radiation dose design objectives for maintaining effluent releases as low as reasonably achievable in accordance with Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50. (The doses to a member of the public calculated to result from the release of this radioactivity would be 2.2×10^{-10} rem, as compared to the public dose limit from licensed activities, 0.1 rem, found in 10 CFR 20.1301.) As is the situation with marine sites, we did not include the drinking water pathway in this estimate. The licensee has investigated why the berm did not contain the leak and has lined the berm with an impermeable membrane. After the appropriate analysis

was performed on the remaining water in the waste test tank, the contents (more than 15,000 gallons) were released to Niantic Bay through the normal release path, which is a normal evolution at the plant and allowed under NRC regulations.

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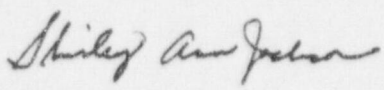

Shirley Ann Jackson

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

CHAIRMAN

February 9, 1999

The Honorable Sam Gejdenson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gejdenson:

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