United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

One Bowdoin Square
Tenth Floor
Boston, MA 02114
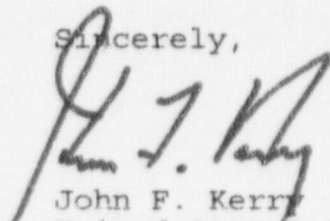(617) 565-8519

April 20, 1999

Mr. Dennis Rathbun
Director, Office of Congressional Affairs
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Rathbun:

I am forwarding to you an e-mail message from my
constituent, Julia Riell, regarding Y2K compliance of the nuclear
power plant in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Please also find
enclosed a copy of the article "Nuke Plants May Not be Y2K Ready"
published March 8 on Wired News which discusses this issue and
for which Ms. Riell provided the URL.

I would be grateful for any information you can offer which
responds to this inquiry and look forward to hearing from you.
If I can be of assistance in this matter or any other, please do
not hesitate to contact Betsy McEvoy of my Boston office at (617)
565-8519.

Sincerely,

John F. Kerry
United States Senator

JFK/bm

Author: aida@meganet.net at Internet
Date: 3/9/1999 8:30 AM
Normal

TO: john kerry at Kerry-DCTO: senator@kennedy.senate.gov at internetSubject: Technology News
s from Wired News------------------------------------- Message Contents

Dear Honorable Senators Kennedy and Kerry,

I am concerned about the Y2K compliance of the Plymouth. Ma. nuclear
plant. If the plant does not meet the NRDC requirement of indicating its
Y2K compliance by July first, 1999 , then it should be shut down at the
end of the year to avoid any Y2K related program failures.

Thank you for your continuing concern about your constituents and the
environment. I have enclosed a URL regarding Nuclear plants and their
Y2K readiness, for your review.

http://www.wired.com/news/news/technology/story/18335.html

Regards,

Julia Riell
9 Mayflower Ridge Drive
Wareham, MA 02571

from: Wired News
www.wired.com/news/news/
technology/story/18335.html

Nuke Plants May Not Be Y2K Ready
Reuters

5:30 p.m. 8.Mar.99.PST
The US nuclear-power industry is
ill-prepared for Y2K, which could disrupt
the delivery of electricity needed to cool
reactors and avoid meltdowns, experts
warned Monday.

The warning came amid concern that the
nuclear sector may not be as far along as
other US industries in preparing its
computerized operations for the turn of
the century.

US Representative Edward Markey said
the Nuclear Regulatory Commission
needed to be more aggressive in dealing
with the computer problem's potential
effect on the nation's electricity grid and
its nuclear power-plant infrastructure.

"The NRC needs to ensure that reliable
backup power sources will be available for
all of the reactors that are operating
when the millennium arrives," the
Massachusetts Democrat told a
congressional symposium on Y2K nuclear
threats.

The millennium problem arises because
many older computers record dates using
only the last two digits of the year. If left
uncorrected, such systems could treat
the year 2000 as 1900, generating errors
or system crashes next 1 January.

Normally, reactors are connected to the
larger electrical grid, which brings in the
necessary power for cooling. The NRC
requires every reactor to have on site at

least two diesel-powered generators to
provide emergency power in case of
failure.

But some experts at the symposium
questioned the reliability of the backup
generators in the face of Y2K-induced
power shortages.

"It is imperative that this issue is
addressed at this very critical time
frame," Paul Gunter, director of the
Nuclear Information and Resource
Service's Reactor Watchdog Project, told
reporters at a news conference.

He added that the NRC should be more
stringent in setting Y2K standards,
especially in light of a November audit of
the Seabrook, New Hampshire, reactor,
which found 12 safety-related systems
affected by the Y2K bug.

"They have to draw a line of nuclear
safety and shut down any plant that
crosses the line," Gunter said.

For ongoing Year 2000 coverage, visit
Wired News' special section.

However, Steven Unglesbee, a
spokesman for the Nuclear Energy
Institute, said nuclear-power plants have
been working with the NRC on a standard
industry approach to potential Y2K
problems for the past three years. Plants
have multiple safety systems, in addition
to the diesel generators, and reactor
controls respond to conditions within the
reactor itself that have nothing to do
with the computer, Unglesbee said.

"We're confident that the power plants

will enter the next century generating electricity at the same safe levels they do today," he said. "When the clock strikes midnight, they will be as safe as they are now."

Western analysts have been more concerned about Russia's nuclear plants, which have lagged behind the United States in Y2K preparations. Last week, an independent Ukraine power expert said that all five of the Ukraine's aging nuclear-power plants could be paralyzed when the clock ticks into the next century.

The world's worst nuclear accident occurred in 1986 when Ukraine's Chernobyl plant exploded, spewing a cloud of radioactive dust over Russia and parts of Western Europe.