

TOM TAUKE
2D DISTRICT, IOWA



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

July 20, 1989

COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND
FINANCE
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SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING
RETIREMENT INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT—
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
TASK FORCE FOR THE RURAL ELDERLY

Mr. Kenneth M. Carr
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I recently received the enclosed letter from one of my constituents, Mr. John T. Shaff of Camanche, Iowa, regarding the Commonwealth Edison plant at Cordova, Illinois. Any observations or comments you might care to share with me as I prepare a response would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your assistance.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Tom Tauke
Member of Congress

TT/es

Enclosure

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COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE OFFICE INDICATED.

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116 SOUTH SECOND STREET
CLINTON, IA 52732
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John T. Shaff
RR 1, Box 193
Camanche, Iowa 52730
(319) 522-2554
July 11, 1989

The Honorable Tom Tauke
2244 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Tauke:

Enclosed is a copy of an article printed in the Clinton Herald July 6, 1989. You may remember our conversations of early this year on this subject. Since I live approximately three miles from the Commonwealth Edison plant at Cordova, Illinois, I am upset that action is not being taken NOW to remedy what is obviously a design flaw in the containment system of this facility.

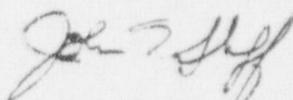
According to the article the NRC staff recommended that the action be taken on all such plants as soon as possible or practical. With this recommendation one would wonder if the NRC members are more interested in utility companies or in the common good of the public. There have been numerous articles that would insinuate that the NRC members have the utilities in mind more than anyone else.

I have read that President Bush's nominee to the NRC thought that people had an unreasonable fear of atomic energy, I would suggest that it is more a healthy, reasonable fear based on the record of a few companies and the inaction of the NRC in matters such as the one outlined in the enclosed article.

I am writing this letter also to Senator Grassley and to Senator Harken in the hope that the three of you can either yourselves or with other senators and representatives join in a bipartisan effort to force the NRC into action on this matter.

As a farmer I cannot easily move to another region if this area is wiped out by a nuclear disaster, the roots of my family on this farm date back to 1837.

Very truly yours,



John T. Shaff

John T. Shaff
RR 1, Box 193
Camanche, Iowa 52730
(319) 522-2554
July 11, 1989

Mr. Cordell Reed
Senior Vice President
Commonwealth Edison Company
Post Office Box 767
Chicago, Illinois 60690

Dear Mr. Reed:

We briefly met at the visitors center of the Quad Cities Nuclear Plant January 4, 1989 at a SALP report meeting. After the meeting you and I visited about the plant in general and particularly about the containment system of the plant. I live 3.1 miles NNW of the plant.

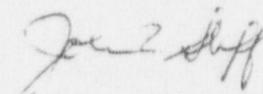
Enclosed is an article dealing with containment systems of Mark I plants in the United States including the Quad Cities facility. I would like to know if any modifications of the containment system is in the works in light of this announcement and if not, why not?

I am very aware of the fine line that you have to tread between turning a profit for stockholders and maintaining a safe facility for the people living in the area.

I also am convinced through Ron Higgins, the onsite NRC inspector, that the facility is managed quite well and is not a prime candidate for a disaster. However, each year of age that is added to the facility increases the chances for something to happen particularly if all maintenance and inspection people are not on their toes. For this reason I would hope that you can look at your containment and either feel assured it is very adequate for the needs or else make it that way according to the NRC guidelines.

Again please send some information as to your stand on the containment issue.

Very truly yours,


John T. Shaff

Copies: Congressman Tom Tauke
Senator Charles Grassley
Senator Tom Harken
Governor Terry Branstad

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THURS 7/6/89

Mandatory nuke plant change nixed

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission rejected a staff recommendation that protective containment shells on 24 commercial nuclear power reactors be modified to lessen the risk of rupture in the event of a severe accident.

The commission said there was no need for a blanket requirement for the changes, although it ordered a plant-by-plant study of whether hard pipe vents should be added to the containment buildings, known as Mark I and made by General Electric Co.

The vents would relieve severe pressure that would build up if the reactor core were damaged. A containment failure could lead to the release of dangerous amounts of radioactivity into the atmosphere.

Anti-nuclear groups have urged the NRC to shut down plants with Mark I containment buildings, saying they pose too great a risk to public health and safety.

The NRC staff earlier this year recommended requiring the changes at all 24 plants — about a quarter of the nation's nuclear power stations.

The commission rejected that approach Wednesday, but said it would require the hard pipe vents at any plant deemed by NRC analysts to need them. It said the case-by-case approach should settle the question for all 24 plants within three years.

The 24 plants were selected because their containment buildings are believed to be more vulnerable to rupture during a severe reactor accident than other containment systems.

The commission also said it would approve vents at any plants that voluntarily chose to install them. Few are expected to do it voluntarily.

As a further precaution, the commission ordered its staff to speed up implementation of an existing NRC requirement that a Mark I plant be capable of withstanding a total loss of electrical power without overheating the reactor.

Kenneth Boley, a nuclear expert for the Public Citizen environmental group, said the NRC was "buying time" for the nuclear industry by promising further study.

Plant owners generally opposed a blanket requirement for improvements to the Mark I containment system, saying they would not appreciably reduce the risk of rupture.

Of the 24 reactors with Mark I containments, four are not operating. They are Philadelphia Electric Co.'s Peach Bottom No. 3, and the Tennessee Valley Authority's Browns Ferry No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3.

The remaining plants in the study, their location and owners are:

Brunswick, two reactors at Southport, N.C., Carolina Power & Light Co.; Cooper, Brownsville, Neb., Nebraska Public Power District; Dresden, two reactors at Morris, Ill., Commonwealth Edison Co.; Quad Cities, two reactors at Cordova, Ill., Commonwealth Edison and Iowa Gas & Electric Co.;

Duane Arnold, Palo, Iowa, Iowa Electric Light & Power Co.; Fermi 2, Laguna Beach, Mich., Detroit Edison Co.; Nine Mile Point 1, Scriba, N.Y., New York Power Authority; James A. Fitzpatrick, Scriba, N.Y., Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.; Edwin I. Hatch, two reactors at Baxley, Ga., Georgia Power Co.;

Hope Creek, Salem, N.J., Public Service Electric & Gas Co.; Millstone 1, Waterford, Conn., Northeast Utilities; Monticello, Monticello, Minn., Northern States Power Co.; Oyster Creek, Toms River, N.J., GPU Nuclear Corp.; and Vermont Yankee, Vernon, Vt., Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp.