



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

SEP 13 1989

Mr. Richard Pope
Post Office Box 986
Claremont, New Hampshire 03743

Dear Mr. Pope:

I am responding to your letter to Senator Humphrey regarding Seabrook in which you suggested establishing a national control center to monitor cooling water temperatures of all nuclear reactors in the U.S.

Cooling water temperature in the reactor coolant system is currently monitored by plant operators at all reactors since it is an important parameter. Pressurized water reactors, such as Seabrook, will automatically shut down on high reactor coolant temperature, but boiling water reactors, because of inherent differences in design from pressurized water reactors, do not automatically shut down on high reactor coolant temperature. All reactors, however, will automatically shut down at high reactor power levels. Excessively high reactor power levels can be detected sooner than high reactor water temperature. The reactor coolant temperature increase at Three Mile Island, which you cited, occurred after the reactor was already shut down and was caused by loss of reactor coolant inventory without replenishment.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission considers operator competence a major factor in nuclear plant safety. To assure that operators will respond properly to abnormal plant parameters, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission licenses reactor operators and regularly assesses licensees' operator training and requalification programs. Following the accident at Three Mile Island, operator training has been improved to include training on plant-specific simulators. A Safety Parameter Display System is required at all plants to assist operators in monitoring key parameters and comparing these measurements to acceptable limits. We also have an ongoing accident management program to ensure that licensees develop and utilize available equipment and procedures most effectively to detect and manage abnormal transient conditions before such events could progress to what would be termed an accident.

Consequently, we believe that establishing a national control center to monitor the reactor coolant temperatures of all reactors would not provide an added margin of safety. The necessary parameter measurements and automatic shutdown signals are generated only at the plant, and no additional control information would be provided by the national control center. Further, the potential for reactor operator distraction resulting from incoming telephone calls could actually be detrimental to safety.

I appreciate your concern for reactor plant safety, and want to assure you

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Mr. Richard Pope

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that reactor plant operational safety is of paramount importance in the NRC's day-to-day regulatory activities.

Original signed by
Frank P. Gillespie

Frank P. Gillespie, Director
Program Management, Policy Development
and Analysis Staff
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

cc: Senator Gordon J. Humphrey

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Thomas E. Murley, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

cc: Senator Gordon J. Humphrey

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555
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ACTION

FROM:

DUE: 09/12/89

EDO CONTROL: 0004716

DOC DT: 08/24/89

FINAL REPLY:

Sen. Gordon J. Humphrey
(Referred by 8/25/89 ltr fm FERC)
TO:

Martha Hesse, FERC

FOR SIGNATURE OF:

** GRN **

CRC NO: 89-0770

Murley

DESC:

ROUTING:

ENCLOSES LETTER FROM DICK POPE CONCERNING NUCLEAR
REACTOR TECHNOLOGY

DATE: 08/29/89

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NRR

Murley

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:
REPLY DIRECT TO CONSTITUENT

NRR RECEIVED: AUGUST 29, 1989

ACTION: PMAS/PTSB GILLESPIE/THOMAS

NRR ROUTING: MURLEY/SNIEZEK

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PAPER NUMBER: CRC-89-0770 LOGGING DATE: Aug 28 89
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AUTHOR: Sen Gordon Humphrey
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SUBJECT: Nuclear reactor technology
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NOTES: FERC referral dated 8/25--const-Dick Pope
DATE DUE: Sep 12 89
SIGNATURE: . DATE SIGNED:
AFFILIATION:

Rec'd Off. EDO

Date 8-29-89
Time 10 A

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