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October 27, 1999

Mr. Dennis Rathbun  
Director, Office of Congressional Affairs  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Rathbun:

Enclosed please find additional information received from Mr. John M. Sherman regarding his ongoing concerns about the Farley Nuclear Plant. It is requested that this new information be given appropriate consideration when evaluating his case.

In the event my office may be of further assistance, please contact Karen Daniel at (404)347-2202. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Coverdell  
United States Senator

PDC/khd



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Wednesday, October 27, 1999

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## GAO Urges More U.S. Nuclear Y2K Precautions

01:49 a.m. Oct 27, 1999 Eastern

By Jim Wolf

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A small number of U.S. nuclear power facilities remain potentially vulnerable to the Year 2000 computer glitch, congressional investigators said Tuesday.

At particular risk are two plants -- in Pennsylvania and Alabama -- that have not yet completed their 2000-related work on operating and support systems, the General Accounting Office (GAO) said in a report to Congress.

"Similarly, the four nuclear fuel facilities that were not Y2K ready by September 1, 1999, raise concern" as does "not knowing the Y2K status of all 14 decommissioned plants with spent fuel," the GAO said.

But the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the federal government's nuclear safety watchdog, said it had concluded Y2K will no pose no safety problems to any of the nation's 103 commercial nuclear power plants.

The residual Y2K work -- at Peach Bottom reactor 3 in Pennsylvania and Farley Unit 2 in Alabama -- involves systems that do not bear on safety, testified Frank Miraglia, an NRC deputy director for reactor programs.

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**Peach Bottom Unit 3 is due to complete its Y2K fixes by the end of this month. It is upgrading a digital "Feedwater" system and a turbine vibration monitor, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry policy group.**

**The second plant, Farley 2, shut down on Oct. 15 for renovations to its digital electro-hydraulic system, required for plant operations, the Nuclear Energy Institute said.**

**Farley 2's startup is projected for mid-December, Miraglia told a joint hearing of the House Science subcommittee on technology and Government Reform panel on government management, information and technology.**

**"Based on our review of responses from the nuclear power industry concerning Y2K readiness, our independent inspection efforts at all 103 units, and our ongoing regulatory oversight activities, we conclude that the Y2K problem will not adversely affect the continued safe operation of U.S. nuclear power plants," he said.**

**Both Miraglia and Keith Rhodes, GAO's chief scientist, voiced concern about potential problems for Soviet-built reactors if they lose off-site electrical power during the 2000 rollover, a risk cited by U.S. intelligence.**

**The NRC said it was developing an international "Y2K Early Warning System" for sharing information about any nuclear power problems. So far, about 25 countries -- including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, several West European states, Canada and Mexico -- have signed on to the program, said Miraglia.**

**GAO, the investigative and audit arm of Congress, voiced qualms about a lack of independent reviews of the U.S. industry's Y2K testing and emergency exercises.**

**"We believe that NRC should obtain information on the scope and extent of nuclear power plants' emergency exercises, and whether**

these exercises have incorporated Y2K scenarios," GAO said.

It faulted the lack of an NRC requirement for "Day One" planning -- a set of actions to be carried out by all nuclear facilities in late 1999 and early 2000.

The authors of the GAO report, Rhodes and Joel Willemsen of the Accounting and Information Management Division, called on the NRC to evaluate and report on the Y2K status of all decommissioned plants with spent fuel that had reported lags in readiness.

Of the 19 permanently shut-down nuclear power plants in the United States, 14 continue to store highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel in swimming pool-like containers, according to the NRC.

No formal guidance on Y2K -- a design flaw that could cause unprepared computers to crash on Jan. 1 -- had been issued to decommissioned plants, Miraglia acknowledged. They would have an extended amount of time to take relatively simple corrective actions should Y2K failures occur, he said.

But Miraglia said NRC staff had telephoned all "decommissioning reactor licensees" early this year, "and they all stated that they had taken actions to address the Y2K issue."

The most serious external risk to a nuclear reactor is the loss of off-site electric power. This typically causes the reactor to shut down. In such a case, emergency safety systems take over, including standby diesel generators for cooling the reactors to prevent a meltdown.

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