



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

JUN 06 1979

(NRC PUBLIC DOCUMENT 00011)

Mr. Carl J. Hemmer
and Mrs. Patricia A. Hemmer

EX 6

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hemmer:

This is in response to your letter of March 18 to the President regarding the orders by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on March 13 to shut down five nuclear power plants in the eastern United States because of questions about the ability of their piping systems to withstand earthquakes.

Shortly before those orders were issued, it became apparent to NRC staff that analysis techniques which had been used in the seismic design of safety-related piping for these five plants were not in accord with proven and generally accepted engineering practices. The result could be overstressing of piping and supports for earthquakes which might occur during the lifetimes of these plants. The eastern United States is generally believed to be a region of low seismicity, when compared to the western part of the country, but it is not without significant historical seismic activity. Attached is a map showing the location and intensity of earthquakes that have occurred in your region.

Some of the piping systems involved could, if failure occurred, cause loss of coolant to the nuclear reactor. In addition, systems needed to shut the plant down safely in that event could also be affected. Thus, an earthquake of not extremely low likelihood would have the potential both for causing an accident and for preventing operation of safety systems designed to cope with the accident. Whether or not such an earthquake caused damage in populated areas, it is essential that any serious radiological contamination be prevented.

Our objective is to review the situation in an expedited and disciplined manner so that the plants can be returned to operation with assurance that this will not constitute a threat to the public health and safety. We are mindful of the economic hardships that can occur as a result of plant shut-downs and are working as hard as we can to avoid any unnecessary delays in

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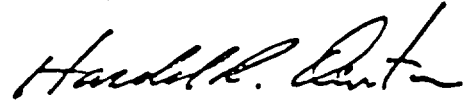
Mr. Carl J. Hemmer
and Mrs. Patricia A. Hemmer

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bringing the plants back on line. After completion of reanalysis and modifications of the piping systems, the NRC on May 24 terminated the shutdown order for one of the five plants, the Maine Yankee Atomic Power Station. Reanalysis or review of the other plants is in progress.

Sincerely,



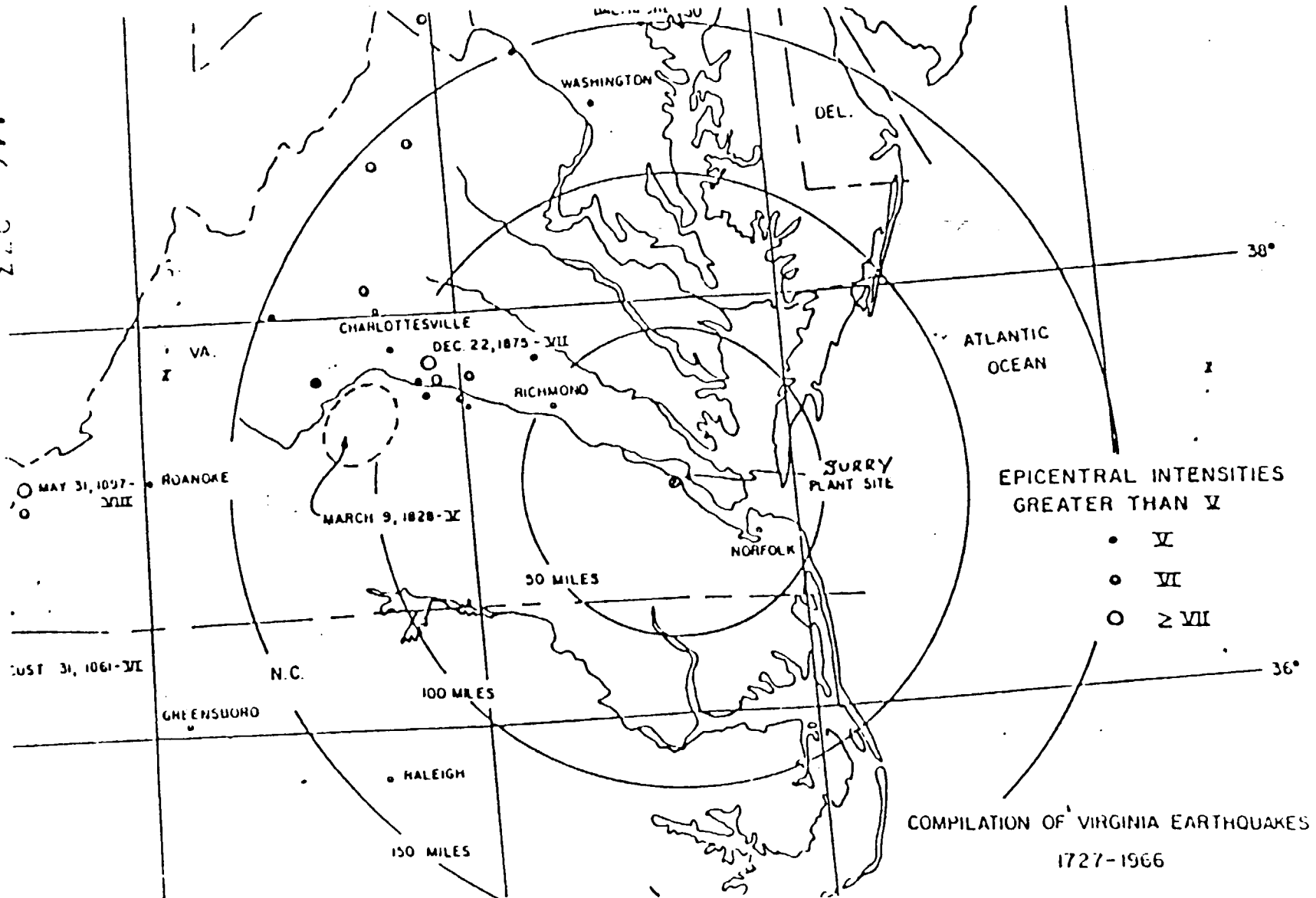
Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor
Regulation

Enclosure:
Earthquake Map for Virginia

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POOR ORIGINAL



[Redacted] EX 6

March 11, 1979

President Jimmy Carter
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Carter:

We are writing to protest the recent decision of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to close a series of nuclear-powered generating plants, including the VEPCC units that service us, until their cooling systems have been earthquake-proofed. We think that the decision epitomizes the kind of partially thought-through federal decision that hurts citizens more than it helps them. We think it is a decision that contradicts the reforms of the federal government that you pledged yourself to bring about. And we think that a reasonable modification of this decision is within your power.

Clearly, NRC thinks that it is carrying out its mandated responsibilities. Earlier regulations were inadequate when the plants were constructed. Technically, NRC was negligent in protecting our interests. But now, when it sets out to correct past mistakes, it must also keep all of our interests in mind.

The likelihood of an earthquake of sufficient magnitude hitting the nuclear facilities in such a way as to trigger the problems NRC projects is extremely low. If such a tremor hits, people will die in far larger numbers from collapsed buildings and bridges and from the aftermath of the disaster. Put in perspective, NRC's worries cover only a small part of the prospective disaster. If the unlikely earthquake misses the nuclear plants, the rest of the disaster will still occur. In short, if the government is in the business of protecting us against earthquakes, the NRC action is totally inadequate. We presume that your administration has no plan to earthquake-proof all the other facilities likely to be affected, closing them down in the meantime. For all its good intentions, the NRC decision finds no reasonable rationale in a responsibility to make nuclear power units safe from earthquakes. The problem is that the NRC has not thought through the other consequences of its decision because they are outside of its field of responsibility. What happens to the cost of electric power for users that must now rely on scarce and costly petroleum fuels for an indefinite period? Should other agencies interpret their responsibilities to protect citizens from remote disasters? Will we halt all driving until the highways are safe? Prohibit all smoking? Surely these activities will result in more deaths than any earthquakes the NRC projects.

In short, please draw the NRC into conversation with the rest of the government and get them to put the problem into a sane perspective. Make the repairs over a reasonable period when the cost to citizens of the NRC's earlier mistakes can be minimized.

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Carl J. Hemmer
Carl J. Hemmer

Sincerely,
Patricia A. Hemmer
Patricia A. Hemmer

POOR ORIGINAL

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