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From: "Carolyn Lorie" <clorie@reformer.com>
To: <nas@nrc.gov>
Date: 5/5/04 4:19PM
Subject: FW: Coalition responds to NRC's order for independent engineering assessment at VY

----- Original Message -----

From: cristobl@sover.net
To: necnp@necnp.org
Subject: FW: Coalition responds to NRC's order for independent engineering assessment at VY
Date: Wed, 5 May 2004 12:09:34 -0400

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New England Coalition

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on Nuclear Pollution

May 5, 2004
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New England Coalition response to NRC Engineering Assessment at
Vermont
Yankee

Today's announcement by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission
(<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/news/2004/04-055.html>)
and its accompanying letter to the Vermont Public Service Board
states
that an engineering assessment inspection will be conducted at
Vermont
Yankee prior to the implementation of a 20% power uprate at the plant.

New England Coalition notes that had it not been for NEC's pursuing
and
advocating since March 2003 for a full Independent Safety Assessment
at
Vermont Yankee, today's NRC announcement would not have taken place.

Had NEC not expended great time and resources intervening in the
Vermont Public Service Board "uprate case" there would have been no
call for any special assessment at the plant. (It should be noted
that
throughout the PSB hearing process the Department of Public Service
and
the state's Nuclear Engineer opposed every NEC call for an
Independent
Safety Assessment.)

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Had it not been for NEC's advocacy with the Vermont Senate, the Vermont House of Representatives, the New Hampshire Legislature, the Massachusetts legislature, and the elected leaders of towns and cities throughout the tri-state area, and the resulting resolutions, calls, and letters from those bodies and elected officials who recognized the seriousness of the proposition, the NRC would have conducted no additional inspection as a part of their uprate review process.

"NRC's announcement finally validates New England Coalition's work on this issue, and we expect the upcoming inspection will validate our concerns regarding the condition of Vermont Yankee and its lack of conformance to design basis," said Peter Alexander, NEC's executive director. "However, we are deeply concerned that this inspection does not meet the scope and depth of the kind of diagnostic evaluations performed at other plants in crisis, such as Millstone, D.C. Cook, and Maine Yankee."

New England Coalition will also insist that the inspection process be open to state and citizen review. "Twenty-five years of ongoing NRC inspections failed to keep track of missing fuel," said NEC Staff Technical Advisor Raymond Shadis. "In fact, NRC assured the public on March 31 this year that all spent fuel had been accounted for and verified, just three weeks before the two fuel rods were discovered missing. This shows that civilian oversight is essential to the process."

NEC was questioned whether it would approve of the uprate if the results of the NRC special inspection show that Vermont Yankee is in good shape. "Absolutely not," said Shadis. "The scope and depth of the inspection is insufficient to fully examine the condition of the aging plant." Shadis gave as examples that while the plant is operating many of the critical systems cannot be accessed, such as the pressure vessel, the control rods, and other reactor internals.

Further, Vermont Yankee has asked for and been granted an exemption from testing their Main Steam Isolation Valves. These are the valves that must seal tightly and instantaneously to prevent the release of radioactive material into the environment in the event of an accident.

"We do not think it prudent to wait until there is an accident to test these valves under full pressure," said Shadis.

New England Coalition thanks the members of the public and elected officials without whose insistence even this level of inspection would not have come about.

End

Neil,

When is the uprate review process set to begin and will the engineering assessment be done at the same time?

carolyn

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