

From: Neil Sheehan *RT*  
To: Rick Ennis  
Date: 6/16/04 10:59AM  
Subject: Re: [Vermont\_Yankee\_Power\_Uprate] State raises questions about Yankee uprate

Rick,

I just took another look at the Smallheer story and think I can figure out what happened. She asked if the new engineering inspection was something only being done at plants seeking a power uprate. I told her that was not the case, that it would be done at all plants sooner or later. She then referred to it as a "regular" review, which causes confusion between the inspection and overall uprate review.

Neil

*nm*  
>>> Rick Ennis 06/16/04 09:02AM >>>

The article is confusing the 4000 hours for the amendment review with the time spent on the engineering inspection. Neil - can you call Susan Smallheer?

*rel  
DUP*

>>> Stuart Richards 06/16/04 08:55AM >>>

Below is a news article from Vermont. I copied one paragraph which indicates that the NRC announced a 4000 hour engineering assessment?? Did we really do that?? I think we need to be proactive with the media and straighten that mistake out now, and not wait to get to the PSB to do it. These errors can take on a life of their own. The inspection will be about 700 hours of direct inspection effort. There will also be some prep and documentation time. - Stu

From the article below:

"At the same time, the Public Service Board, the quasi-judicial board that hears utility matters, scheduled a conference with the NRC on the power boost, specifically to address whether the NRC's announcement of a 4,000-hour engineering assessment would satisfy the board's conditional approval of the so-called power uprate."

State raises questions about Yankee uprate - Jun. 16, 2004

By SUSAN SMALLHEER Herald Staff

The Douglas administration has raised questions about the safety of several key areas with Vermont Yankee nuclear plant's plan to increase power.

The Department of Public Service has asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission not to rely on the calculations done by Entergy Nuclear engineers, but to do its own, independent calculations into the safety of Yankee's cracked steam dryer, the anticipated increase in vibration in the piping throughout the plant due to increased steam flows, and containment overpressure in the reactor.

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Additionally, the department said the potential release of additional radiation from the plant, in the event of an accident, because of the proposed changes, was unacceptable.

The steam dryer and pipe vibration have been trouble spots at other nuclear reactors in Illinois that have undergone similar power increases.

"Vermont asks that NRC perform independent calculations in three areas to confirm the adequacy of the proposed uprate," wrote David O'Brien, commissioner of the Department of Public Service, the state's liaison with the federal agency.

O'Brien sent a second letter last week, opposing a key request of Entergy's uprate plan, that could ultimately increase the release of radiation in the event of an emergency at Vermont Yankee.

"Doubling the allowable leakage would mean potentially exposing Vermonters to twice as much radioactive leakage from the main steam isolation valves in the event of a design basis loss-of-coolant accident," O'Brien wrote. "Exposing Vermonters to this increased potential is unnecessary and undesirable," O'Brien wrote.

The uprate changes would increase the radiation dose at the fence line surrounding the plant.

O'Brien asked the NRC to provide information about the increased risks to Vermonters.

At the same time, the Public Service Board, the quasi-judicial board that hears utility matters, scheduled a conference with the NRC on the power boost, specifically to address whether the NRC's announcement of a 4,000-hour engineering assessment would satisfy the board's conditional approval of the so-called power uprate.

Susan Hudson, clerk of the Public Service Board, said the hearing conference on June 28 would allow the board to ask NRC officials questions about the extent of the engineering assessment that it announced last month it would do.

The Public Service Board granted Entergy Nuclear a state certificate of public good for the power increase, but conditioned it on what it called "an independent engineering assessment."

"The purpose of the meeting is to allow the NRC to describe the regulatory process and the new engineering inspection," Hudson said, noting that the board had not made any final decision on whether it would accept the new NRC inspection program.

A spokesman for the NRC, Neil Sheehan, said two top-level NRC officials from Washington would explain the first-in-the-country engineering assessment.

"In the case of the Vermont Yankee inspection, it will include

components from multiple systems that are potentially affected by a power uprate, such as the emergency core cooling systems, the containment system, power conversion systems and auxiliary systems," Sheehan said.

He said the regular review will involve three weeks of on-site inspection and more than 700 hours of direct inspection time. At this point, he said, the on-site inspection work is tentatively planned for August.

Robert Williams, a spokesman for Entergy Nuclear, downplayed the significance of the two letters from the state about the uprate review and the upcoming hearing conference.

"This type of communication is part of the oversight process," Williams said. "We stand ready to provide any additional information."

The Public Service Board, by federal law, cannot consider safety issues because of a federal pre-emption. Its domain is economic and environmental issues. The NRC has sole responsibility for evaluating safety issues.

William Sherman, the state's nuclear engineer with the Department of Public Service, said the letters to the NRC were a follow-up on letters the department had written late last year. The state has yet to receive an answer from federal regulators on several key issues.

He said the two letters identified key technical issues that were emerging on the power increase.

Sherman said the state was concerned about the adequacy of the steam dryer, which was discovered to have 20 cracks this spring; only two were serious enough to require repairs.

The steam dryer, technically not a safety component, could crack and break, sending a piece down a pipe, compromising other safety components.

Almost two months ago, the NRC discovered that two pieces of a highly radioactive fuel rod were missing and unaccounted for at Vermont Yankee. That discovery had led to increased scrutiny and criticism of Vermont Yankee, particularly by Vermont's congressional delegation and Gov. James Douglas. Officials believe the fuel rod pieces, recently described by Entergy as bigger than originally thought, as 9 and 17 inches long.

The leading critic of Entergy Nuclear's plans said the Douglas administration was a Johnny-come-lately to the problems behind the uprate, noting that the department had long opposed any additional engineering or safety review by the NRC of the power increase.

"Basically, they hear the pitter-patter of little ballots coming up behind them," said Raymond Shadis, senior technical advisor with the anti-nuclear New England Coalition.

"Anything that the state does to get NRC to do better work and more work on this case is good," he said.

But Shadis said the state made a mistake when it asked that the NRC include those three potential problem areas in its new engineering assessment. Those calculations should be made in addition to the engineering assessment, he said.

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**Mail Envelope Properties (40D0606B.C01 : 9 : 35118)**

**Subject:** Re: [Vermont\_Yankee\_Power\_Uprate] State raises questions about Yankee uprate  
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**From:** Neil Sheehan  
**Created By:** NAS@nrc.gov

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	Emptied	07/17/04 01:27AM
	Re: [Vermont_Yankee_Power_Uprate] State raises questions about Yankee uprate	

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**Priority:** Standard  
**Reply Requested:** No  
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**Concealed Subject:** No  
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