

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 1991

Honorable Kenneth Carr
Chairman
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

During the last thirteen months we have addressed to you numerous inquiries concerning the quality of safety-related welds at the Seabrook Station. We remain troubled by the Commission's apparent inability to achieve a definitive resolution of questions that we have brought repeatedly to its attention beginning in February 1990. No doubt you must also agree it is reasonable to expect that a year of NRC staff activity would have yielded more than a multiplication of doubts and uncertainty surrounding the quality assurance (QA) program at Seabrook.

We do recognize that a positive development has occurred in recent weeks -- the NRC staff has now recognized a condition long since identified by Congressional investigators: the licensee had no independent means of establishing that its piping contractor had performed all radiographs as required by NRC regulations. The licensee is unable to provide, and may never have maintained, its own list of the safety related welds at Seabrook Station that required radiographic examination. Simply stated, a year-long investigation by NRC staff and the licensee has so far proved that the licensee's records, and information pertaining to them transmitted to the NRC, are inaccurate and incomplete.

Since initiation of our inquiry, it has been revealed that the licensee performed an additional layer of radiograph review in order to compensate for significant deficiencies in the piping contractor's work product. We have also discovered, however, that this additional review, which the NRC's post-construction investigation concluded was necessary to assure that welds were of the requisite quality, was not conducted in accord with NRC quality assurance regulations.

The recent disclosure of the licensee's failure to develop and/or retain critical data bolsters existing doubts as to the accuracy and completeness of the information presented to the Commission when it made its decision to grant an Operating License for the Seabrook Station.

9105080255 910502
PDR ADDCK 05000443
P PDR

March 21, 1991

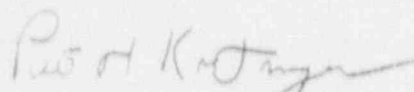
While we have found no strong evidence indicating widespread weld defects, we do not believe the existing state of plant documentation is sufficient to support the Commission's implicit determination, in granting an Operating License, that the welds at Seabrook meet the Commission's safety standards. Moreover, we do know that certain weld related activities at Seabrook were not conducted in conformity with the Commission's procedural and documentation requirements.

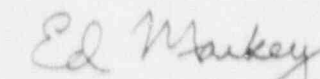
It appears from the NRC staff's March 19 letter to the licensee that, while the staff believes the welds are safe, it does agree with us that additional effort is required to put the Seabrook weld issues to rest. However, we are hard pressed to understand why, after a year of investigation by the NRC, Congressional staff, and the licensee, the licensee itself is now being asked to construct, retroactively, a credible weld list which can be reconciled with its existing records. At this late date, the licensee and/or NRC Region I staff cannot be relied upon to make an appropriate and credible determination of the safety significance of the weld record deficiencies.

In light of these circumstances, we request that the NRC Office of Investigations (OI) immediately be tasked with determining the full extent of the quality records problem at Seabrook. We request further that OI be directed to retain an independent outside contractor to provide the expert technical assistance necessary to carry out this assignment; the contractor should be asked to identify from Seabrook design and construction drawings a complete list of safety related welds requiring radiographs and to reconcile this list with the inventory of weld records maintained in the licensee's permanent storage vault.

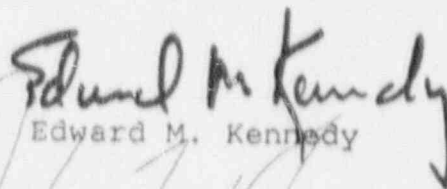
We ask that the OI investigators be directed to consult with our staffs prior to initiation of this inquiry. Such consultation will help to assure a sharply focused investigation is conducted that will achieve a definitive resolution of the issues we have brought before the Commission during the past 13 months.

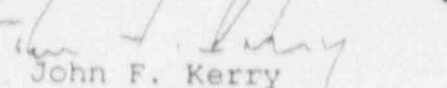
Sincerely,


Peter H. Kostmayer


Edward J. Markey


Nicholas Mavroules


Edward M. Kennedy


John F. Kerry