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April 25, 1985

Nunzio J. [redacted]dino
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

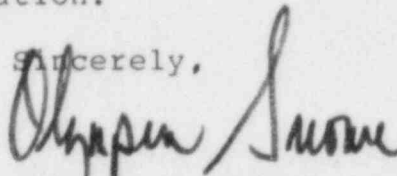
Dear Mr. Chairman:

I wish to bring to your attention a letter I received recently from Mr. Rae Bachelder from North Edgecomb, Maine. I share Mr. Bachelder's concerns, and I have enclosed a copy of his letter for your consideration.

Mr. Bachelder is concerned about the permit approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in January to allow the Maine Yankee Atomic Power Company to construct an interim low-level nuclear waste storage facility. I would appreciate your explanation of the Commission's requirements to allow a permit for this facility.

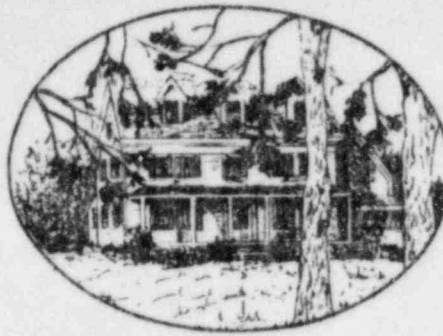
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


OLYMPIA J. SNOWE
Member of Congress
2nd District, Maine

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May I call your attention to the enclosed "back page" article which was recently printed in the local newspaper.

It is extremely disconcerting to learn that there are no state or federal licensing requirements with which Maine Yankee must comply in order to build a \$1.1 million low-level radioactive waste storage building. The "fact" that this building is to function as an interim storage facility allows Maine Yankee complete autonomy regarding design, construction and operation.

The article points out, however, that Maine Yankee has not ruled out storage beyond 5 years. It is obvious that once the building is in service, its use will expand to accommodate whatever the current demands are of the plant, the region and the state.

When will leadership require measures, which are not short-sighted and politically expedient, but rather ones which will insure that our decisions have positive long-term results for future generations?

I shall look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Rae J. Bachelder

enc.
rjb

Maine Yankee Needs No Further License To Proceed With \$1.1 Million Radioactive Waste Storage Building

By JENNIFER LOGAN

About the only license Maine Yankee needs to build their \$1.1 million low-level radioactive waste interim storage building is a local building permit.

According to building inspector Raymond Dalton, the permit was issued January 31. Maine Yankee does not need additional state or federal licensing because it is for the temporary storage of the plant's own waste for a five-year period, according to the state and federal officials contacted about the building.

The five-year only storage period exempts Maine Yankee Atomic Power Co. from meeting stricter statutes and guidelines set up to regulate radioactive waste storage, beyond those stated in its current NRC license.

Maine Yankee officials discussed their plans for the facility with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in an information-only meeting held in Bethesda, Maryland on Monday morning.

Maine Yankee's Executive Vice President John B. Randazza and Douglas Whittier from the plant's licensing division attended the meeting, according to NRC project manager Kenneth Heitner.

The Maine Yankee officials said they based building specifications on an estimated 12,000 cubic feet of waste generated per year.

The plant is the state's chief radioactive waste generator, producing 85 percent of the state's roughly 10,000 cubic feet of waste annually.

Maine Yankee has already described the facility as a 67 by 153-foot, concrete-lined building located near the contractor parking lot and the railroad on the plant site. Construction is slated to begin in May. Preliminary design work is being done by the Portland architecture and engineering firm E.C. Jordan.

Assistant plant manager Tom Boulette said the low level waste (see inset article) to be stored in the building will include plastic bottles, clothing, wipes, filters and filter resins which will be compacted into a solid form.

The material will be stored in steel drums lined with a concrete-like substance, according to Heitner.

Boulette said the plant opted not to store low-level waste in the liquid form, a type of

The Many Faces Of Low-Level Waste

Radioactive waste not classified as high-level radioactive waste, transuranic waste, spent nuclear fuel, or by-product material as defined in section 11e(2) of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954.

((Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980))

Low level waste from nuclear power plants includes sludges, filters, resins, replaced piping, and decommissioned plant equipment. Some low level wastes must be isolated from the environment for as much as 500 years before their harmful effects have disintegrated.

(Maine League of Women Voters, Information brochure)

Low-level waste generally has small amounts of radioactivity in large volume material. Produced by many commercial, medical and industrial procedures, made up primarily of items—paper, filters, gloves and tools—contaminated contact with radioactive matter.

(Atomic Industrial Forum, Inc., Information brochure)

"Low-level waste is everything except fuel rods and the liquid which comes from reprocessing fuel rods. It's not just gloves and booties people wear, it includes filters and filter sludges. That stuff is radioactive it can kill you from four feet away if you're unshielded."

(Maria Holt, spokesman for the Mid-Health Research Group)

waste which would require a more elaborate storage facility.

The design, on-site location, construction, and operation of the facility rests with Maine Yankee. As stated in a 1981 NRC letter written by the director of the office of nuclear material safety and safeguards, "Recent emphasis to staff is that guidance does not constitute requirements. Staff prefers the use of the word 'should' rather than 'shall'."

One possible concern is whether the facility will be located on a bedrock aquifer, an area which produces high yields of groundwater.

The "basic engineering studies" conducted on the site by plant staff apply to foundation work only, said public affairs officer John Arnold.

"The material will be packaged in such a way that that is the barrier, not the building," said Arnold.

It is the plant's position that further engineering studies for a temporary storage facility are not needed, said Arnold.

State geologist and commission member Walter Anderson said the \$13,000 regional study of bedrock fracture systems now barely underway in Lincoln County is "by no means adequate for site specific analysis" and won't be completed until the end of the summer at

the earliest.

"As to whether or not there is a groundwater aquifer at Maine Yankee, I don't know," said Anderson. "I wish there was more specific on their environmental guidelines," he said.

"The storage facility doesn't bother me," said Anderson. "The thing that bothers me is disposal. That's when we're talking about years."

Meanwhile Maine Yankee has not requested storage beyond a five-year period.

Heitner said the Maine Yankee reaffirmed their October 22 letter to the Maine waste commission.

"Maine Yankee will cooperate with Commission findings that the best alternative for interim storage (beyond five years) is waste generated by others in the State for those wastes to be stored at or near Yankee," said Randazza.

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