

March 5, 1997

Mr. Donald A. Reid
Vice President, Operations
Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
RD 5, Box 169
Ferry Road
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

Dear Mr. Reid:

SUBJECT: VERMONT YANKEE, SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF LICENSEE
PERFORMANCE (SALP) REPORT NO. 50-271/97-99

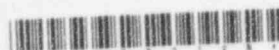
This letter forwards the Vermont Yankee SALP report (Enclosure 1) for the period July 16, 1995 to January 18, 1997. This assessment was conducted under the current SALP process that the NRC implemented on July 19, 1993. The SALP process rates licensees in four functional areas: operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support. The plant support area comprises radiological and effluent controls, chemistry, security, emergency preparedness, fire protection, and housekeeping.

Vermont Yankee's overall performance remained essentially constant over the course of this SALP period. Operators performed well during planned evolutions and unplanned transients. While performance in the area of problem identification was somewhat mixed, improvements were noted, particularly regarding identification of problems related to design basis conformance and engineering program adequacy. In addition, some improvements were noted in the material condition of the plant as indicated by a reduction in plant trips and transients caused by equipment problems. Radiological controls and other plant support programs continued to be implemented effectively.

Notwithstanding these performance improvements, human performance problems continued to be noted. For example, maintenance and modification activities resulted in several unexpected plant challenges due to poor communications and coordination among the maintenance, operations, and engineering staffs. Also, weaknesses were found in surveillance test procedure adequacy and adherence. Further, inconsistencies were noted in the scope and depth of root cause analyses and in the prioritization of corrective actions. Audits, self-assessments, and oversight committee activities have been generally effective in identifying problems; however, Vermont Yankee was not fully effective in using problem reporting and self-assessment results to achieve necessary improvements in procedural quality and human performance.

Lastly, Vermont Yankee identified a number of design basis conformance and engineering program problems this SALP period: The nature of these problems underscores the need for continuing an aggressive search for additional problems in these areas. The NRC staff plans to closely follow Vermont Yankee's efforts.

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Enclosure 2 provides the schedule and basis for the NRC inspections of your facility planned for the next year. We will inform you of any changes required to the attached inspection schedule. The routine resident inspection effort is not included in this schedule.

We have scheduled a management meeting with you, open for public observation, at 3 p.m. on March 12, 1997, at the Vernon Town Hall. At the meeting, you should be prepared to discuss our assessment and any initiatives you plan to take to address the weaknesses detailed in our evaluation. In particular, we need to understand your current and planned actions directed at identifying and resolving design basis and engineering program problems.

We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:

Hubert J. Miller
Regional Administrator

Docket No. 50-271

Enclosures:

1. SALP Report No. 50-271/97-99
2. 12 Month Inspection Plan for Vermont Yankee

cc w/encls:

G. Marret, Plant Manager
R. McCullough, Operating Experience Coordinator
J. Duffy, Licensing Engineer, Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
J. Gilroy, Director, Vermont Public Interest Research Group, Inc.
D. Tefft, Administrator, Bureau of Radiological Health, State of New Hampshire
Chief, Safety Unit, Office of the Attorney General, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
R. Gad, Esquire
G. Bisbee, Esquire
R. Sedano, Vermont Department of Public Service
T. Rapone, Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety
State of New Hampshire, SLO Designee
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, SLO Designee
State of Vermont, SLO Designee
Chairman Jackson
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Dicus
Commissioner Diaz
Commissioner McGaffigan
Institute for Nuclear Power Operations (INPO)

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