

March 31, 2000

Mr. Ted C. Feigenbaum
Executive Vice President and Chief Nuclear Officer
Seabrook Station
North Atlantic Energy Service Corporation
c/o Mr. James Peschel
P.O. Box 300
Seabrook, NH 03874

SUBJECT: PLANT PERFORMANCE REVIEW - SEABROOK STATION

The purpose of this letter is to communicate our assessment of your performance and to inform you of our planned inspections at your facility. On February 24, 2000, we completed a Plant Performance Review (PPR) of Seabrook Station. We conduct these reviews to develop an integrated overview of the safety performance of each operating nuclear power plant. We use the results of the PPR in planning and allocating inspection resources and as inputs to our senior management meeting (SMM) process. This PPR evaluated inspection results and safety performance information for the period from January 16, 1999, through January 31, 2000, but emphasized the last six months to ensure that our assessment reflected your current performance. Our last full and mid-cycle PPR reviews of Seabrook Station were provided to you in letters dated April 9, 1999, and September 30, 1999, and were discussed with you in a public meeting on December 17, 1999.

The NRC has been developing a revised reactor oversight process that will replace our existing inspection and assessment processes, including the PPR, the SMM, and the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP). We recently completed a pilot program for the revised reactor oversight process at nine participating sites and are making necessary adjustments based on feedback and lessons learned. We plan to begin initial implementation of the revised reactor oversight process industry-wide on April 2, 2000.

This PPR reflects continued NRC process improvements as we make the transition into the revised reactor oversight process. You will notice that the following summary of plant performance is organized differently from our previous performance summaries. Instead of characterizing our assessment results by SALP functional area, we are organizing the results into the strategic performance areas embodied in the revised reactor oversight process. In addition, we have considered the historical performance indicator data that you submitted in January 2000, in conjunction with the inspection results, in assessing your performance. The results of this PPR were used to establish the inspection plan in accordance with the new risk-informed inspection program (consisting of baseline and supplemental inspections). Although this letter incorporates some terms and concepts associated with the new oversight process, it does not reflect the much broader changes in inspection and assessment that will be evident after we have fully implemented our revised reactor oversight process.

During the last six months of this assessment period, Seabrook operated at full power most of the time, except for a downpower to perform maintenance on the main generator, and a shutdown to remove impurities from the steam generators as required by the plant chemistry guidelines.

We have not identified any significant performance issues during this assessment period in any of the three strategic performance areas (reactor safety, radiation safety and safeguards) and note that Seabrook continued to operate in a safe manner. Therefore, we currently plan to conduct our normal baseline inspections at your facility as noted in the attached inspection plan. In addition, we plan to review one area that is separate from our baseline inspection program. During the week of July 31, 2000, we plan to conduct an Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation (OSRE) revisit to resolve outstanding issues from the previous OSRE that was conducted in January 2000. We will continue with these evaluations until the NRC staff approves the industry proposed Self Assessment Program as an acceptable substitute.

Although the plant was operated well during the period with few operational challenges, some work planning weaknesses were noted that challenged plant operators and maintenance technicians. Performance has improved in the areas of problem identification, and adequacy and timeliness of corrective actions following your extensive corrective action program improvements late in the assessment period in response to weaknesses identified during the previous assessment period. We will monitor your progress in response to these issues during baseline inspections.

Enclosure 1 contains a historical listing of plant issues, referred to as the Plant Issues Matrix (PIM), used during this PPR process to arrive at our integrated view of your performance trends. The PIM for this assessment is grouped by the prior SALP functional areas of operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support, although the future PIM will be organized along the cornerstones of safety as described in the revised reactor oversight process. The attached PIM includes items summarized from inspection reports or other docketed correspondence between the NRC and North Atlantic Energy Service Corporation regarding Seabrook. We did not document all aspects of licensee programs and performance that may be functioning appropriately. Rather, we only documented issues that we believe warrant management attention or represent noteworthy aspects of performance. In addition, the PPR may also have considered some predecisional and draft material that does not appear in the attached PIM, including observations from events and inspections that had occurred since our last inspection report was issued but had not yet received full review and consideration. We will make this material publicly available as part of the normal issuance of our inspection reports and other correspondence.

Enclosure 2 lists our planned inspections for the period April 2000 through March 2001 at Seabrook to allow you to resolve scheduling conflicts and personnel availability in advance of our inspector arrival onsite. Since many of our inspections at Seabrook and at other Region I facilities during this period involve a team of inspectors, our ability to reschedule inspections is limited. Therefore, we request that you inform us as soon as possible of any scheduling conflicts. The inspection schedule for the latter half of the period is more tentative and may be adjusted in the future due to emerging performance issues at Seabrook or other Region I facilities. Routine resident inspections are not listed due to their ongoing and continuous nature.

We will inform you of any changes to the inspection plan. If you have any questions, please

Mr. Ted C. Feigenbaum

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contact me at (610) 337-5129.

Sincerely,

/RA/

James C. Linville, Chief
Projects Branch 6
Division of Reactor Projects

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Enclosures:

1. Plant Issues Matrix
2. Inspection Plan

cc w/encls:

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