



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I**
475 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-1415

January 19, 2012

Ms. Sandra Gavutis
Executive Director
C-10 Research and Education Foundation
44 Merrimac Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Ms. Gavutis:

I am responding to your letter of December 22, 2011. In your letter, you detailed your organization's concerns regarding the concrete degradation noted at the Seabrook Station due to an Alkali-Silica Reaction (ASR), and asked a range of questions regarding how this issue is being addressed by the NRC. You also requested prompt public access to licensee and NRC documents related to the technical review of this matter.

Your organization's interest in this matter is shared by other stakeholders as well. For example, we recently received a letter from Congressman Edward Markey on this issue. I attached our agency's response to him for your information. We intend to keep the public fully informed of our inspection efforts and any related findings in this matter in the future.

In your letter, you requested answers to several questions. Our response to those questions is attached. If we can be of more assistance, please contact Richard S. Barkley of my staff at 610-337-5065.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William M. Dean
Regional Administrator

Enclosures:

1. Response to Questions Raised by C-10 on
ASR Concrete Degradation at Seabrook Station
2. Letter to Congressman Edward Markey dated December 22, 2011

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Enclosure 1

Response to Questions Posed by C-10 on Concrete Degradation by ASR

Question 1:

Would the concrete degradation have been identified if the sampling conducted in support of the license renewal application not been done? (Additional questions were posed depending on the answer to this question. The second paragraph below provides information related to those additional questions.)

Response:

It is our understanding that NextEra was in the process of upgrading their monitoring program for structures to the latest American Concrete Institute (ACI) standard. While this standard does give guidance on detecting ASR, it would be speculation on our part as to how soon this problem would have been identified absent the sampling performed in August 2010 in support of license renewal. At this point, the problem has been identified, NextEra has expanded its evaluation of the issue, and engineering reviews to date have indicated that the safety-related concrete structures impacted by the ASR degradation remain capable of performing their safety function.

As stated in Information Notice 2011-20, the NRC staff is reviewing the license renewal application for Seabrook Station. Work on that renewal has been delayed pending the submittal of an aging management plan for safety-related concrete structures impacted by ASR. The aging management program will include additional measures and actions to manage the effects of aging from ASR-induced degradation during the period of extended operation. These measures will also ensure that ASR-degradation does not impact the operability of any safety-related concrete structure during the remaining term of the facility's current operating license. Seabrook Station is one of the newest nuclear stations in the US, yet it was the first plant to identify and pursue addressing ASR-induced concrete degradation as part of license renewal. Thus the NRC will be evaluating the need for any changes to its inspection program going forward contingent on our findings in this matter at Seabrook Station.

Question 2:

(This question is related to a Request for Technical Assistance between Region I and the NRC Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, dated September 11, 2011, which contained five questions related to the ASR issue.) Have these five questions been answered? If yes, will the NRC make the answers publicly available? If no, what is the expected time-frame for the NRC to answer these questions?

Response:

The response to this request for technical assistance, also called a Task Interface Agreement, has not yet been finalized. Region I anticipates that these questions will be answered in the near future. When the response to this request for technical assistance is finalized, the answers will be made publicly available. We'll see to it that C-10 gets a copy of the response upon issuance.

Question 3:

Is the public being denied access to materials that would otherwise be available because Seabrook's owner has enabled NRC headquarters staff to access materials remotely?

Response:

No. All ASR-related information submitted by NextEra on the NRC docket is readily available to the public. As indicated in previous discussions with C-10 staff, the licensee is required by our regulations to provide the NRC access to licensee documentation onsite as necessary to carry out our licensing and inspection functions. Thus there is a body of information that the NRC has had access to which has not been formally provided to the NRC as part of a licensing action or request. These documents are not under the possession and control of the NRC, but remain in the licensee's records system. Electronic access to these records provides NRC staff offsite ready access to a large number of licensee documents in a more efficient manner. These documents still remain in the possession and control of the licensee, not the NRC.