

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2020

James L. Robo
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
NextEra Energy, Inc.
700 Universe Blvd.
Juno Beach, Florida 33408

Dear Mr. Robo,

We write regarding the coronavirus pandemic and the refueling process at the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant (“Seabrook”). Although we understand that refueling is necessary to keep Seabrook online, we are concerned that the current refueling effort could expose nuclear plant workers and the surrounding community to coronavirus-related health and safety risks. We seek your commitment to working with us and community leadership to conduct these operations in a transparent and responsible manner during the ongoing pandemic.

As part of the refueling process, hundreds of specialized contract workers from around the country will be temporarily employed at Seabrook. This large influx of workers into the confines of Seabrook portends dangerous conditions conducive to the spread of the coronavirus — not only among the contract workers, but among the permanent employees and surrounding communities that provide food, housing, and other essential services to the entire Seabrook workforce. NextEra has stated that it has a pandemic plan and is following “well-established procedures for ensuring continuity of service.”¹ But your company has not provided public information about how it is protecting workers with mitigation strategies such as the use of personal protective equipment, social distancing, deferral of non-critical maintenance, staggered shift schedules, temperature monitoring, or paid sick-leave policies.

Recent events at another nuclear power plant justify concerns about the risks that the refueling process poses. At the Limerick Generating Station, an Exelon nuclear plant in Pennsylvania, authorities have already confirmed five coronavirus cases among the more than 1,000 temporary workers currently working on the plant’s refueling process.² Contractors there said they were

¹ Bruce Gellerman, *Seabrook Is Nation's First Reactor Refueled During Virus Crisis*, WBUR (Apr. 2, 2020), <https://www.wbur.org/earthwhile/2020/04/02/seabrook-nuclear-reactor-refuel-coronavirus>.

² Carl Hessler, Jr., *5 coronavirus cases confirmed at Limerick nuclear plant; 38 employees quarantined*, The Mercury (Apr. 7, 2020), https://www.pottsmmerc.com/news/coronavirus/5-coronavirus-cases-confirmed-at-limerick-nuclear-plant-38-employees-quarantined/article_3be6dd62-78d4-11ea-9ddb-3fb3f8ed6c25.html.

“terrified” about working in a “breeding ground” for the virus, particularly after starting work without any social distancing measures in place.³ NextEra must take steps to publicly address concerns arising out of Seabrook’s refueling during the coronavirus public health crisis. Specifically, we call on NextEra to take the following actions:

First, by April 25, 2020, please provide us with a copy of the NextEra pandemic plan.

Second, after we have had an opportunity to review that plan, we request a briefing from NextEra on how it is changing its refueling plan to protect workers and surrounding communities during the pandemic. This should include a presentation on the exemptions that NextEra received from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on work-hour control limits and other inspection activities during the pandemic. These exemptions will allow for more refueling work-schedule flexibility, but safe operations must be maintained despite the longer shifts and reduced inspections.⁴

Finally, NextEra should immediately establish open lines of contact with local leaders, so that if any Seabrook worker were to test positive for the coronavirus, public health officials could take rapid and prudent steps to control the spread.

Thank you for your attention to these requests. We look forward to your prompt reply. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Hannah Vogel of Senator Markey’s staff at hannah_vogel@markey.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ho K. Nieh, *U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Planned Actions Related to the Requirements for Work Hour Controls During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Public Health Emergency*, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (Mar. 28, 2020), <https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML20087P237>