UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

PDR

February 11, 2000

CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-2107

Dear Congressman Markey:

I am responding to your letter of January 10, 2000, regarding the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) December 21, 1999 Year 2000 (Y2K) security advisory. As requested, I have enclosed a copy of the advisory. You also expressed an interest in the threat assessment process used to prepare the advisory and how NRC communicates security-related matters to NRC licensees.

The NRC threat assessment program includes an ongoing review of available intelligence information regarding the domestic and foreign threat environments. As part of this effort, staff routinely interacts with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Energy (DOE), and other Federal agencies concerned with counterterrorism and threats. In the months leading up to the New Year, NRC threat analysis staff took a number of specific steps to address issues associated with the rollover into the year 2000, including the potential for terrorist attacks in the United States. In the final weeks, NRC staff contacted and discussed with other Federal agencies and other organizations NRC's threat-related information needs and activities during the New Year period. While a number of incidents, including rumors or suspicious actions that were determined to be groundless from a threat perspective, were reported and assessed, our staff did not identify credible threat information involving NRC licensed material or facilities. During the actual rollover, NRC threat analysis staff provided coverage at the NRC Operations Center.

The advisory of December 21, 1999, was issued at a time of extreme national sensitivity to security concerns and great potential for miscommunication and over reaction. The advisory was coordinated with the FBI and DOE and was intended to serve three purposes. First, the advisory was intended to provide an authoritative assessment of the domestic threat environment. Second, the advisory was to reassure licensees that information concerning any significant change to the threat environment would be provided by NRC to them in a timely manner. Third, the advisory reminded licensees to maintain a vigilant security posture and encouraged them to report suspicious activity. In response to the advisory, licensees made several reports to the NRC, which NRC assessed in coordination with the FBI and determined were not threatening incidents.

The NRC protects sensitive security-related information and limits its dissemination to appropriate individuals, i.e., primarily to licensee staff involved with physical security at NRC-licensed facilities who have a need-to-know. Threat-related information must be provided to

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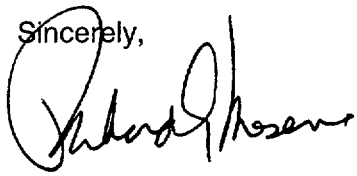
licensees in a timely manner. Advisories, depending on the circumstance, are conveyed from NRC headquarters to regional staff by way of open or secure phone lines and facsimile, or electronic mail. Regional staff then forwards the information to the appropriate NRC licensee contacts. In an emergency, the advisory is provided directly to the licensee from headquarters, and it is possible that classified or sensitive, non-classified information would be provided directly to a licensee by local FBI agents. Dissemination of the information is limited to individuals with a need-to-know within a licensee's security organization.

NRC, like other Federal agencies concerned with terrorism, takes its responsibilities to secure the nation's commercial nuclear facilities very seriously. Thank you for your continuing interest in physical security matters at NRC-licensed activities. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: Information Assessment Team
Advisory (Limited Distribution)