

June 27, 2000

Mr. Russell Salter, Chairman  
Federal Radiological Preparedness  
Coordinating Committee  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW, #614  
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Mr. Salter:

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff finds significant value in assessing event responses and gaining insight from previous experiences. After reviewing the lessons learned from the Federal response to the criticality event in Tokai-Mura, Japan, and the Y2K Federal response and coordination effort, an important issue has come to light concerning Federal exchange of information and protocols for communication with the public following a radiological event in a foreign country.

As you know, the objective of the Federal Radiological Emergency Response Plan (FRERP) is to establish an organized and integrated capability for timely coordinated response by Federal agencies to peacetime radiological emergencies. The FRERP provides the Federal government's concept of operations based on specific authorities for responding to radiological emergencies, outlines Federal policies and planning considerations on which the concept of operations of this Plan and Federal agency specific response plans are based, and specifies authorities and responsibilities of each Federal agency that may have a significant role in such emergencies. The FRERP covers any peacetime radiological emergency that has actual, potential, or perceived radiological consequences within the United States, its territories, possessions, or territorial waters and that could require a response by the Federal government. The level of the Federal response to a specific emergency will be based on the type and/or amount of radioactive material involved, the location of the emergency, the impact on or the potential for impact on the public and environment, and the size of the affected area.

The FRERP recognizes appropriate Lead Federal Agencies (LFA) for responses to both foreign and domestic events with potential radiological consequences. However, regardless of the protocols established in the FRERP, there continues to be an ongoing need for the NRC and other Federal agencies to share and coordinate information regarding events at foreign nuclear facilities effectively. Several Federal agencies may be expected to comment to the public about the event and to address the potential for such an event to occur in the United States.

For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would be the LFA for any significant foreign radiological event, and EPA would monitor such an event with the focus of protecting the health and safety of United States' citizens. However, NRC and the Department of Energy would be expected to answer questions regarding the likelihood for a similar event to occur in the United States and to the nature of the potential consequences of such an event. Therefore, there is an ongoing need for the applicable Federal agencies to effectively share and coordinate information with each other and with a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

In order to enhance the United States' response to international events with potential radiological consequences, the NRC recognizes that the Federal government needs to speak with "One Voice" and that the proper avenue for pursuing this issue is through the Federal Radiological Preparedness Coordinating Committee (FRPCC). This effort constitutes a significant challenge; however, it is believed that this initiative is important enough to merit the continuing effort by the affected agencies to ensure that it is executed appropriately.

As you may recall, Dr. Charles L. Miller, Deputy Director, Incident Response Operations, raised the need for pursuing this issue at an FRPCC meeting that was held on January 18, 2000. The FRPCC members in attendance were generally receptive to the "One Voice" concept and agreed with the need for this initiative. In addition, you and Dr. Miller briefly discussed the need for this effort while you were attending a Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center Leadership Symposium on February 29 through March 2, 2000. You also endorsed the initiative in your remarks at the National Radiological Emergency Preparedness Conference held recently in Reno, Nevada. We therefore request that you distribute this "One Voice" initiative to the FRPCC members and raise it as a topic for discussion at the next FRPCC meeting. We volunteer to chair an applicable committee or subcommittee that is assigned or formed to resolve the pending issues and establish the appropriate protocols.

We appreciate the opportunity of working with the FRPCC on enhancing the Federal response capability. Please call me at (301) 415-7476 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Congel, Director  
Incident Response Operations

|     |                         |      |
|-----|-------------------------|------|
| cc: | Chairman Meserve        | OGC  |
|     | Commissioner Dicus      | CIO  |
|     | Commissioner Diaz       | CFO  |
|     | Commissioner McGaffigan | OCA  |
|     | Commissioner Merrifield | OIG  |
|     | WDTravers               | SECY |
|     | FJMiraglia              |      |

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Sincerely,

/RA Charles L. Miller for

Frank J. Congel, Director  
Incident Response Operations

cc: Chairman Meserve  
Commissioner Dicus  
Commissioner Diaz  
Commissioner McGaffigan  
Commissioner Merrifield  
WDTravers  
FJMiraglia

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