

March 12, 2001

The Honorable Sandra R. Galef
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 540
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Ms. Galef:

I am responding to your letter dated February 12, 2001, concerning resident inspector staffing at the Indian Point 2 and 3 nuclear power stations. You expressed concern about the potential reduction of on-site inspectors at Indian Point 2 and 3, based on information in an article in The Journal News.

As you are aware, there are currently four resident inspectors assigned to the Indian Point plants. This is more than the number of resident inspectors at most two-unit sites, and results from ownership of the two plants by different licensees. If the plants become owned by one company, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) would carefully evaluate a variety of issues relating to the ability of the new owner to operate the facility effectively as a single site. For example, the integration of programs, procedures and plant staff organizations would need to be evaluated. As I stated during the interview, it will, therefore, be some time before decisions can be made about reducing resident inspector staffing at the Indian Point site.

It is also important to note that, no matter how many resident inspectors are assigned to a site, the total amount of inspection a plant receives is determined by criteria established by the NRC's Reactor Oversight Program. The Regional Office may be called upon to supplement inspection resources at a site in response to specific issues or degrading plant performance. For example, under the Reactor Oversight Process, we expended approximately twice the inspection effort at the Indian Point 2 plant during the past year that we spent at other single unit sites.

The Commission most recently addressed resident inspector staffing in January 2000. Although the decision was made to reduce permanent resident staffing at some sites, the Commission stated that the policy revision will not in and of itself result in a reduction of inspection resources. Basing additional inspection resources at regional offices rather than at the plants permits a greater agency focus on safety by enhancing NRC's ability to allocate resources among plants on the basis of licensee performance.

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As you know, we have just completed a special inspection of the Indian Point 2 plant (95003 Supplemental Inspection). We anticipate maintaining heightened level of inspection and oversight at the facility for some time.

If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve