

April 9, 2001

Mr. C. L. Moore
9305 NW 59th Terrace
Parkville, Missouri 64152

Dear Mr. Moore,

This letter is in response to the nuclear security issues that you raised, via electronic mail, on February 12, 2001, to United States Senator Christopher S. Bond of Missouri. You expressed concerns with "poor" security at the "Peachtree #2 power plant" where you ended up after making a wrong turn from the northeast corner of Maryland. Specifically, you indicated that you drove a tractor-trailer with a 48-foot van onto the plant's property and did not encounter anyone to stop you from doing so or to show signs that you should not be in the area. You further indicated that you were able to drive your vehicle within a couple hundred feet of the main building on the backside of the plant before parking in a parking lot about 100 feet from the building.

Upon exiting your vehicle, you indicated that you went inside the security area to get directions and were asked if you were making a delivery. After getting directions, you indicated that you left the area from a different road than the one used upon entry. Based on this experience, you developed two concerns. One concern was that had your vehicle been loaded with explosives, you believe that it would have been "quite simple" to blow up the plant. The other concern was that this plant's security was "no where near the same" as you experienced at a nuclear power plant in Kansas, where you had to "stop at a guard gate quite some distance from any building."

Before addressing your concerns, clarification of the actual plant in question is necessary. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has not licensed a nuclear power plant named Peachtree #2. However, given your geographical description and location, it appears that the facility you are referring to is the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in Delta, Pennsylvania. In addition, it is necessary to inform you of the regulatory requirements for the physical security of nuclear power plants and a licensee's discretion to control activities outside of the plant's protected area. The distinction between an owner-controlled area and a protected area is fundamental in order to address your concerns.

Since a licensee (the utility company) owns and controls the land surrounding a nuclear power plant, that land is defined as the owner-controlled area (OCA), and it may be publicly accessible. The area where you drove and parked your vehicle was the OCA. The area encompassing a nuclear power plant and its safety equipment is a protected area (PA). NRC regulations require implementation of stringent access control measures before personnel and vehicles can enter a PA, which do not apply to the OCA. The regulations also require the PA to be protected with a physical barrier and a vehicle barrier system (VBS). The VBS is designed to protect against the use of a land vehicle as a means of transportation to gain unauthorized proximity to vital areas.

The physical protection of a nuclear power plant starts at the PA boundary (e.g., fence line). All operating nuclear power plants licensed by the NRC have established safe stand-off distances

and constructed VBSs accordingly to minimize the explosive effects from a vehicle bomb. Other physical security controls and countermeasures are in place to deter individuals from committing acts of radiological sabotage against a nuclear power plant. All security requirements are detailed in Section 73.55 to Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations. A copy is enclosed for your information.

Based on your account of entering the OCA from one road and exiting on another, it appears that your entry was near Peach Bottom, Unit 1. Unit 1 is a decommissioned reactor. Therefore, the provisions of 10 CFR 73.55 no longer apply. Units 2 and 3 of Peach Bottom Station are both operating reactors.

The main buildings that you referred to in your correspondence with Senator Bond are both outside the PA. One is an administrative building, which houses offices, and the other is a warehouse. Neither building is essential to safe operation of the plant. Therefore, the proximity of your vehicle to these buildings did not constitute a threat to safe operation of Peach Bottom Station. While a vehicle bomb explosion in close proximity to either building may result in damage, protection of these buildings to prevent such an event is at the discretion of the licensee.

In conclusion, the Peach Bottom Station provides appropriate protection against the potential threat that you have described. There is no regulatory basis for the licensee to implement additional security measures as a result of your concerns.

The NRC appreciates you taking the time to raise your concerns, and we hope that we have adequately addressed them. If you still have concerns regarding these issues, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Bradley S. Baxter of my staff on (301) 415-1088.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Samuel Collins, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: As Stated

cc: The Honorable Christopher S. Bond, United States Senate

The physical protection of a nuclear power plant starts at the PA boundary (e.g., fence line). All operating nuclear power plants licensed by the NRC have established safe stand-off distances and constructed VBSs accordingly to minimize the explosive effects from a vehicle bomb. Other physical security controls and countermeasures are in place to deter individuals from committing acts of radiological sabotage against a nuclear power plant. All security requirements are detailed in Section 73.55 to Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations. A copy is enclosed for your information.

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Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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