

September 14, 2001

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Lowey:

I am responding to your letter of August 8, 2001, which requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) implement the changes suggested in the General Accounting Office (GAO) report, "Progress Made in Emergency Preparedness at Indian Point 2, But Additional Improvements Needed," GAO-01-605, dated July 2001. The Commission shares your view that public health and safety are paramount and that effective emergency plans are an important element in ensuring them. The Commission also recognizes the value of effective communication among Federal agencies, State, Tribal and local governments, and licensees in developing and implementing radiological emergency response plans for nuclear power plants.

The Commission appreciates the insights and recommendation provided in the GAO report, and is giving them serious consideration. The NRC and FEMA currently have several mechanisms for outreach to local officials. However, in light of the GAO report, the NRC will assess its policy and practices for communication with State and local officials during non-emergency situations. We will also work in close coordination with FEMA to assess our current activities to identify where appropriate improvements can be made to enhance interactions with local officials.

The NRC has maintained, and will continue to maintain, very close regulatory oversight of Indian Point 2, particularly concerning emergency preparedness. As you know, while the NRC identified weaknesses in the Indian Point 2 emergency preparedness program, the assessment of these issues concluded that the licensee was capable of implementing adequate measures to protect public health and safety in the event of a radiological emergency. We believe that our assessment of the Indian Point 2 emergency preparedness program has been thorough. We also believe that our regulatory oversight of the corrective actions taken by the licensee in response to identified weakness has been rigorous and thorough. I assure you, our oversight of the Indian Point 2 emergency preparedness program will continue in that manner.

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Upon completion of our review of the GAO report, we will prepare a formal response. We intend to provide the results of that review to you and other Congressional stakeholders. Please contact me if I can be of assistance on this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Meserve

cc: The Honorable Joe Allbaugh, Director
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Identical letter to:

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sue Kelly
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515