

November 26, 2001

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-1903

Dear Senator Snowe:

I am responding on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letter of October 9, 2001, regarding the actions the NRC and the nuclear industry have taken in response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and your concerns about security at the Nation's nuclear power plants and decommissioning reactors. Immediately after the terrorist attacks, the NRC advised nuclear power plant licensees to go to the highest level of security, and all promptly did so by, among other things, increasing patrols, augmenting security forces and capabilities, adding security posts, increasing coordination with law enforcement and military authorities, and limiting access of personnel and vehicles to the sites. With the continued uncertainty about the possibility of additional terrorist activities, the Nation's nuclear power plants remain at the highest level of security and the NRC continues to monitor the situation.

The NRC has coordinated its response with other Federal agencies to ensure the integration of licensees' security forces with Federal response activities. In addition, the NRC has worked directly with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to determine whether anyone on the FBI terrorist watchlist has worked at a nuclear power plant.

Your letter also requested information concerning the specific measures being taken to protect the spent fuel at Maine Yankee. The NRC has issued a number of threat advisories to its licensees since September 11, 2001. Where appropriate, these threat advisories were also sent to decommissioning reactors. In response to these advisories, Maine Yankee Atomic Power Company took certain measures to protect the spent fuel. These measures included posting of security guards, placement of additional vehicle barriers, and other more specific measures the details of which are considered sensitive Safeguards Information.

To confirm that specific measures were taken at the Maine Yankee facility to enhance security, the NRC engaged in the following communications with the licensee. On October 19, 2001, the NRC issued a letter to Maine Yankee outlining four specific criteria that the licensee must satisfy in order to enhance security at the site. On October 23, 2001, in its reply to NRC, the licensee described actions designed to satisfy the four criteria. On October 25, 2001, the NRC issued a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL) to confirm actions taken by the licensee to enhance security at the Maine Yankee site. In this letter, the NRC's Regional Administrator noted that the licensee was required to notify him if its understanding of the commitments differed from that set forth in the CAL.

As for long term changes in security at nuclear facilities, I, with the full support of the Commission, have directed the NRC staff to thoroughly reevaluate the NRC's safeguards and physical security programs. This reevaluation will be a top-to-bottom analysis involving all aspects of the Agency's safeguards and physical security programs. Given the nature of the attacks on September 11, the identification of any necessary adjustments to the safeguards and physical security measures for civilian nuclear facilities must involve consultation and coordination with other U.S. national security organizations. The NRC is currently interacting with the recently established Office of Homeland Security, the FBI, other intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and the Department of Defense to ensure any changes to the NRC's programs are informed by input from other relevant U.S. agencies.

The Commission appreciates your interest in NRC's actions to ensure appropriate security measures at nuclear power plants following the September 11th attacks. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve