

March 5, 2002

Ms. Susan Sunderland
6465 Corral de Piedra
San Luis Obispo, 93401

Dear Ms. Sunderland:

I am responding on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letter dated January 16, 2002, concerning the security and safety of the nation's nuclear facilities. Although nuclear power plants are among the most hardened and secure civilian facilities in the United States, the recent attacks have focused attention on the need to review policies and practices related to safeguards and physical security measures for civilian nuclear facilities.

Immediately following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the NRC advised nuclear power plant licensees to go to the highest level of security, and all promptly did so. With 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. For the longer term, the NRC staff is thoroughly reevaluating 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 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), other intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and the Department of Defense to ensure any changes to the NRC's programs are informed by pertinent information from other relevant U.S. agencies.

Specific actions that have been completed by the NRC to enhance security at the nation's nuclear facilities are as follows:

- Issued over 30 security advisories to NRC licensees to enhance the security posture of the NRC licensed facilities.
- The NRC has recently issued formal orders to licensees mandating additional security requirements.
- Performed onsite physical security vulnerability assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the enhanced security measures that have been put into place post September 11.
- The NRC is participating in several intra-governmental task forces with the Office of Homeland Security, the FBI, Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Energy (DOE), and others to keep informed of the details of the current threat environment and to communicate our actions to other federal agencies to

ensure an appropriate and balanced response throughout the entire energy critical infrastructure of the nation.

Looking ahead, the NRC is continuing to look for ways for licensees to make additional improvements to the security programs at the facilities we regulate. Examples include:

- Continue to re-examine all classes of facilities and activities, to determine any significant safeguards vulnerabilities. Based on identified vulnerabilities, the NRC staff will reevaluate and determine appropriate physical protection, material control and accounting, and access authorization requirements for each class of licensee;
- Assist the Office of Homeland Security and other Federal agencies to evaluate threats beyond the feasibility and capability of NRC licensees to consider potential augmentation and development of options for further protecting nuclear facilities by utilizing Federal, State, and/or local assets;
- Develop protocols for engaging supplemental resources (i.e., Federal, State and local law enforcement officials) for protection of facilities;

NRC has conducted performance-based testing since 1991 against the existing design basis threat (DBT) by means of force-on-force exercises in the Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation (OSRE) program. Licensees were found to have generally effective armed response forces. The purpose of the program is to identify weaknesses and deficiencies and, as a result, licenses have taken corrective actions. The NRC believes that this demonstrates the credibility of such testing and that the program has served an important function by contributing to the identification of areas for improvement in the licensees' security programs.

Enclosed find a recent news release which provides additional information regarding security.

I assure you that we will have your timely and well-considered comments in mind as we study the important issues that affect the safety and security of the nation's nuclear facilities.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Glenn M. Tracy, Chief
Reactor Safeguards, Radiation Safety
and Emergency Preparedness Branch
Division of Inspection Program Management

Enclosure: Press Release No. 02-025

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