

August 13, 2002

The Honorable Jon Kyl  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kyl:

I am responding on behalf of the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letter of April 8, 2002, concerning an e-mail inquiry from one of your constituents, Ms. Debra S. Hamilton, regarding security at nuclear power plants. Ms. Hamilton believes the security at the Three Mile Island (TMI) plant in Pennsylvania is not sufficient and questions its adequacy at the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant in Arizona.

In the e-mail, Ms. Hamilton refers to a series of six photographs found on a web site ([www.earthfiles.com/earth320.htm](http://www.earthfiles.com/earth320.htm)) and indicates the photographs depict lax security at TMI's north entrance. These photographs, taken on January 31, 2002, actually show a security guard inspecting a vehicle at the initial guard gate in the owner protected area. What is not depicted is the presence of additional physical security measures in place at the time, including other check points, vehicle search areas, and additional vehicle barriers.

In order for a visitor to gain access to the TMI plant, the visitor must first obtain authorization from armed guards to pass through a gate onto the island. The visitor must then circumnavigate a series of security barriers along an access road. A similar security access authorization program is maintained at all other sites, including the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant.

These security programs are required by NRC regulations and include well-armed civilian guard forces, physical barriers, detection systems, access controls, alarm stations, and detailed response strategies. NRC inspects licensee security measures as part of its normal reactor oversight process and periodically undertakes force-on-force exercises to ensure that security is maintained at a high level.

In response to the events of September 11, the security posture of nuclear power plant licensees has been enhanced. Immediately following the attacks, the NRC advised nuclear power plant licensees to go to the highest level of security and all promptly did so. Subsequently, I, with the full support of the Commission, directed the staff to thoroughly reevaluate the NRC safeguards and security programs. This work is underway. NRC has issued numerous advisories and has also issued Orders to our licensees. The measures enhance security by providing augmented security forces, increased patrols, additional security posts, additional physical barriers, vehicle checks at greater stand-off distances, enhanced coordination with law enforcement and military authorities, and more restrictive site access controls. These requirements will remain in effect until such time that the NRC determines that the level of threat has diminished, or that changes are needed following the comprehensive security review. I have also communicated with the Governors of the affected States so as to

ensure that any State defensive assets, such as the National Guard or State police, are available as needed to augment our licensees' defensive strategies.

The NRC continually assesses the threat environment in coordination with Federal law enforcement and intelligence communities and will act as necessary to ensure the continued safe operation of all nuclear power plants. Security at nuclear power plants is being maintained at a high level. Please contact me if you have additional questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

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Richard A. Meserve