

May 15, 2002

Mr. Henry Freeman
Editor/Vice President News
The Journal News
One Gannett Drive
White Plains, NY 10604

Dear Mr. Freeman:

The NRC respects aggressive reporting. A questioning attitude and critical viewpoint are vital to the NRC inspector and journalist alike. However, your article on Friday, May 10, "Nuclear water leaked into Hudson," is misleading and inaccurate in several important respects. The article has led to undue public concern as evidenced by your subsequent article on May 11, "Residents fume over reactor leak secrecy."

Your May 10 article inaccurately indicates that radiological releases to the Hudson River and the Buchanan water system occurred and were not disclosed to the public following the February 2000 steam generator tube failure at Indian Point 2. Furthermore, the article suggests NRC sat idly by while the company deceived the public regarding liquid discharges. Nothing can be further from the truth. Shortly after the February event, we held several public meetings in the Buchanan area specifically to talk about the steam generator tube failure and to explain the associated releases, both liquid and gaseous. In April 2000, NRC issued a report by the special team sent to look into the circumstances of the February event. This report specifically describes the total amount of liquid and gaseous radioactivity released and relates these amounts to public health limits.

Statements in the article that radioactive water leaked into and contaminated the Buchanan water system are untrue; it was physically impossible for this to occur.

Many of the references in the May 10 article are inaccurately attributed to NRC reports and documents. The discrepancies referred to in the article were minor, largely administrative issues identified in a January 2001 Consolidated Edison internal self-assessment report. This assessment was performed by Consolidated Edison, Indian Point 2's prior owner, as part of the ongoing process for radiological effluent control and environmental monitoring. NRC inspectors reviewed this assessment report, and confirmed that the issues were addressed by the company. We determined that releases referred to in the assessment report were accounted for and documented in public reports.

Indian Point 2 and other nuclear power plants are allowed, within strict limits, to release water into nearby waterways. These releases must be accounted for and documented to assure that the limits are not exceeded. Further, environmental monitoring programs are designed to detect radioactive material in the environment. NRC routinely inspects these programs; and we have given special attention to these activities at Indian Point 2 following the steam generator tube failure. The levels of radioactivity released as a result of this event were not measurable in the environment as confirmed by the environmental monitoring program. Based on highly

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conservative calculations, estimated dose to a member of the public from liquid releases was less than 0.001 millirem of radiation. This is a small fraction (0.03%) of public health limits and negligible compared to natural background exposures (which total about 350 millirem each year).

Indian Point Unit 2 has received heightened NRC scrutiny over the past several years which we will continue for some time. We have performed extensive plant safety inspections. We have held more than a dozen public meetings near the plant within the past two years to ensure the public is fully informed of plant developments and results of our oversight activities. Rest assured we will continue these efforts.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Hubert J. Miller
Regional Administrator

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