

September 4, 2002

The Honorable Charles W. Stenholm
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Stenholm:

I am responding to your letter of July 11, 2002, regarding a proposed airport in the vicinity of the Comanche Peak Steam Electric Station (CPSES) in Glen Rose, Texas. In your letter you expressed concern that the proximity of the proposed airport to CPSES may have a potential impact on the security of CPSES. In addition, you requested the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to investigate the proposal and communicate any relevant information to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). We have been in communication with the FAA and the licensee for CPSES on this issue.

The FAA informed the NRC of the proposed airport location in a letter dated June 10, 2002. Based on discussion with the FAA, the NRC contacted TXU Energy, the licensed operator of CPSES, and informed TXU Energy that the proximity of the proposed airport and the associated air traffic are such that, should this airport be constructed, the NRC staff anticipates that TXU Energy would provide a safety reassessment of aircraft hazards and, if necessary, take appropriate actions to address any increase in risk. In addition, by letter dated July 25, 2002, the NRC informed the FAA that the construction of an airport in the proposed location would place CPSES in an unanalyzed condition with respect to aircraft hazards and that the licensee would be required to determine the significance of potential aircraft hazards. The NRC further indicated that, if the licensee determines that there is a significant hazard, it is possible that measures to reduce the risk may involve plant modifications that could be significant and/or impractical. In short, we informed the FAA that the operation of the proposed airport could have a significant adverse impact.

The NRC also pointed out to FAA that the NRC's current aircraft hazard assessment methodology only reflects accidental impacts on nuclear power facilities. The NRC is currently assessing the generic implications of aircraft hazards on nuclear power facilities and is evaluating the vulnerabilities and potential effects of an intentional commercial aircraft impact. We will continue to share the results of our evaluations with the FAA, the Transportation Security Administration, the Office of Homeland Security, and other agencies to strengthen the security of nuclear power plants through the enhancement of aviation security.

Congressman C. W. Stenholm

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Thank you for your interest in the security of nuclear power facilities. If you have further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve

Enclosures:

1. Letter to TXU Energy from NRC, July 19, 2002, Review of Proposed Near-site Airport
2. Letter to FAA from NRC, July 25, 2002, Response to FAA Request to Review Proposed Near-site Airport