

September 25, 2002

Mr. Andrew Lichtenstein
4620 Arlington Avenue
Riverdale, NY 10471

Dear Mr. Lichtenstein:

Your letter of August 1, 2002, to the White House was referred to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) because one of your concerns is related to our responsibility for regulating U.S. commercial nuclear power plants. In your letter you expressed concern about living close to a potentially dangerous source of power - the Indian Point nuclear power facility - in light of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

In view of the unprecedented events of September 11, 2001, NRC Chairman Meserve, with the full support of the Commission, has directed the staff to undertake a comprehensive re-evaluation of NRC's security and safeguards programs. This review involves coordination with other Federal agencies. On February 25, 2002, the NRC issued Orders to all commercial nuclear power plants to implement interim compensatory security measures for the high-level threat environment. Some of the requirements formalize a series of security measures that NRC licensees had already taken in response to advisories issued by the NRC following the terrorist attacks, and others are security enhancements which have emerged from the Commission's ongoing security review. Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc., the licensee for the Indian Point facility, has completed the required actions to fully comply with the Orders. In addition, New York State has augmented security at Indian Point with National Guard personnel and State police. Further, the New York State Office of Public Security, working with various Federal and State agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigations, has assessed the long-term security needs at Indian Point. The Office of Public Security report made a number of recommendations to enhance security which Entergy has either implemented or is considering. The NRC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have been working with the Office of Public Security, the New York State Emergency Management Office, and other State and local agencies to enhance coordination involving security and emergency preparedness and planning.

We cannot rule out the possibility of future terrorist attacks on the Indian Point facility; however, we believe that these facilities can continue to operate safely. Nuclear power plants are inherently robust. Their design is based on defense-in-depth principles and includes many features to protect public health and safety. Reinforced containment buildings and redundant safety systems would allow trained operators to prevent or limit the release of radioactive material in the unlikely event of a terrorist attack or other disaster. In light of the facility's defense-in-depth design, the heightened security measures implemented in response to the events of September 11th, and the NRC's ongoing reevaluation of its safeguards and security programs, we do not consider the immediate closure of Indian Point to be necessary to protect the public health and safety.

A. Lichtenstein

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In your letter you indicate that the power provided by Indian Point can be replaced by other means and the cost of replacing it should not be our consideration. The NRC's primary mission is to ensure public health and safety. We do not directly control energy generation and distribution and their associated cost. If you have concerns in this area, you may wish to raise them with the New York State Public Utilities Commission.

I trust that this letter addresses your concern over the safety of Indian Point. Thank you for writing to us about this important matter. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Patrick Milano at 301-415-1457.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Stuart Richards, Director
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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