

December 20, 2002

The Honorable Rick Santorum
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Santorum:

I am responding to your letter of September 11, 2002, to Dennis K. Rathbun, Director of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) Office of Congressional Affairs. Your letter forwarded an e-mail from Mrs. Lynne Ruby of Lewisberry, Pennsylvania, with concerns about the operation of the siren warning system around the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station, Unit 1 (TMI-1), and requested any information we could provide regarding her concerns. The NRC staff contacted AmerGen Energy Company, LLC, the licensee for TMI-1, requesting that they provide information to address Mrs. Ruby's concerns. The licensee responded by letter dated November 4, 2002, a copy of which is enclosed.

The siren test on September 6, 2002, mentioned in Mrs. Ruby's e-mail, was conducted by the licensee to demonstrate the operability of the newly installed siren monitoring and control system. The test program included two full sounding tests on September 6, and successfully demonstrated each county's ability to monitor and control all of the 79 warning sirens. The licensee reviewed the siren system and verified that the design objectives and field test results met criteria established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for siren alert systems.

The licensee contacted a Fairview Township official, who was unable to identify any information regarding Mrs. Ruby's concern. The TMI-1 project Manager, Mr. Timothy G. Colburn, contacted Mrs. Ruby to obtain specifics regarding her siren concerns. He has passed that information, including her address, to the licensee who, as stated in its November 4, 2002, letter, will further investigate to determine if any corrective action is needed and provide a follow-up response to the NRC.

The licensee plans to conduct an acoustic coverage analysis of the siren alert system as a follow up to the year 2000 census. The analysis will use year 2000 census data and a topographical-map-based computer-modeling tool with field-verified ambient noise measurements. The licensee plans to identify any necessary corrective measures by the spring of 2003.

If an actual event were to occur at TMI-1, in addition to activation of the sirens, emergency management personnel would be dispatched, with bullhorns and portable sirens (route alerting) to alert the public. A feedback loop from the sirens indicates which sirens have alarmed and which sirens have not alarmed. These emergency management personnel would be dispatched first to any location where a siren failure has been identified. Sounding of sirens and route alerting do not necessarily indicate the need for immediate evacuation; rather, the function of the siren system and route alerting is to notify the public that an event has occurred

at TMI-1 and to direct the public to tune to the emergency broadcast system for further instructions.

The siren system is tested regularly at TMI-1. Sirens are tested in one of three ways:

- silent tests conducted at least every 2 weeks, which test the continuity of the siren activation circuitry but does not actually sound the sirens.
- growl tests conducted at least quarterly and whenever preventive maintenance is performed. These tests result in a partial and audible activation of the sirens.
- full-scale audible testing conducted at least annually and as required for formal exercises.

In the third quarter of 2002, there were 1185 siren tests, of which 1176 were judged to be successful (99.2 percent with a rolling 4-quarter average of 97.7 percent). This success rate is consistent with the testing results over the previous two years. Siren testing data are posted on the NRC Web site, and are updated regularly. The address for the information is: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/TMI1/tmi1_pi.html#EP03. Then scroll to "Alert and Notification System" for the test results.

I trust this information addresses Mrs. Ruby's concerns. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

Enclosure: AmerGen letter dated November 4, 2002

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