

January 13, 2003

The Honorable W.J. "Billy" Tauzin, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) Office of the Inspector General (IG) recently completed its quadrennial survey of the agency's safety culture and climate. The Commission invites your attention to the enclosed report, which concludes that, compared to 1998 survey results, "the NRC safety culture and climate appear to be improving significantly." The survey recorded improvement across almost every category or topic area, with scores in most cases exceeding two important national benchmarks -- the U.S. Government Research and Technology Composite and the U.S. Research and Development Norm.

Recent press reports have highlighted the survey's results in a single category (continuous improvement commitment), noting that nearly a third of the agency staff question the agency's commitment to safety. The Commission is concerned about this result. However, it is important to note that employee attitudes about the effectiveness of the NRC as a regulatory entity are covered by several other categories, including future of the NRC, organizational change, management leadership, regulatory effectiveness process/initiatives, organizational commitment, and NRC mission. As the report notes on page 13, the results in these categories, "in whole, demonstrate a workforce that has become much more positive about the NRC as an organization (future, effectiveness, image, and mission)."

Although the survey identified other areas in need of improvement, the Commission believes that the survey results reflect an agency workforce which is ready to meet the challenges of protecting public health and safety in the nation's civilian use of nuclear materials. We would welcome any comments or questions you may have.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure:
OIG 2002 Survey of NRC's Safety Culture
and Climate

cc: Representative John D. Dingell

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable W.J. "Billy" Tauzin, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative John D. Dingell

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Rick Boucher

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
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The Honorable James M. Jeffords
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The Honorable David L. Hobson
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The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky
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