

March 17, 2003

The Honorable Bradley M. Campbell
State of New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection
P.O. Box 402
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I am responding on behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), to your letter dated January 10, 2003, regarding your concern about the potential release of contaminated water into waters of the State from a leak in the Salem Unit 1 spent fuel pool located in Lower Alloways Creek Township, New Jersey.

I want to assure you that the Commission takes this issue seriously. Shortly after learning of contaminated water leaks into the Auxiliary Building, NRC resident inspectors and Region I senior specialists initiated reviews of this matter. On December 9-10, 2002, an NRC resident inspector and a regional senior specialist inspector conducted an onsite inspection of the ongoing sampling and mitigation activities. The NRC verified that Public Service Electric and Gas (PSEG) assigned a full-time team to this matter and developed an action plan to address and characterize the leak, including groundwater sampling plans. We continue to monitor PSEG's action plan, and have taken steps to assure the plan addresses the range of activities necessary to appropriately monitor, contain and stop this leakage.

As your letter notes, NRC staff has coordinated closely with your staff at each stage of these efforts. Your staff was involved in various conferences with NRC and PSEG as action plans were developed and are currently observing our inspections. Recently, a senior member of the New Jersey Bureau of Nuclear Engineering accompanied an NRC senior specialist during inspection of deep and shallow well sampling on February 3-4, 2003.

Since discovery of the leak, PSEG has been collecting and analyzing various samples to characterize the leak and its potential impact on the site. On February 6, 2003, PSEG immediately reported to your staff and the NRC that tritium contamination was identified in two onsite test wells. The NRC promptly contacted your staff and discussed the sample results. Both wells indicated tritium concentrations above the State's reporting value with one of the test wells indicating levels above the State's ground water limit.

During the week of February 10, 2003, an NRC senior specialist conducted a radiological environmental monitoring program inspection of the site, including evaluation of the February 6, 2003, sample results. Subsequently, as a result of ongoing PSEG sampling and analysis activities, the NRC was informed on February 19, 2003, that two additional onsite wells indicated tritium contamination above the State's reporting level but below the State's ground water limit. The NRC's evaluation of these sample results showed no offsite or onsite dose consequences associated with these results. Moreover, sample results to date from onsite peripheral wells

have not shown that the contamination has migrated outside the restricted area. Consequently, the NRC has not identified any impact on worker or public health and safety. The NRC continues to review PSEG's actions to characterize the leak, including development of additional sampling plans to better characterize the leak and its impact on the site.

I assure you that NRC Region I staff will continue to follow PSEG's work on this matter, and will coordinate its inspections with and provide relevant information to your staff in the spirit of our cooperative relationship. I trust that this letter is responsive to your concerns. If you have any additional questions or need further information, please contact Dr. Robert J. Bores, NRC Region I State Liaison Officer, at (610) 337-5213.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve