

SUMMARY STATEMENT BY  
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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
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BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS  
AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FOR THE HEARING ON  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AT THE INDIAN POINT ENERGY CENTER

## **Introduction**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss NRC's role in emergency preparedness programs at nuclear energy facilities and the status of NRC oversight of Indian Point.

## **Radiological Emergency Planning and Preparedness**

Following the accident at Three Mile Island in 1979, the NRC concluded improved emergency planning by Federal, State and local governments was needed to respond to possible reactor accidents. To compel this improvement, we issued new regulations that establish planning standards and define the responsibilities of plant operators, as well as State and local organizations involved in emergency response.

For planning purposes, we defined an emergency planning zone covering an area of about 10 miles in all directions around nuclear power plants where the greatest potential for radiological effects from an accident exists. An extended planning zone of about 50 miles is to be established around each plant

to deal with potential lower-level, long-term ingestion pathway risks. Each licensee has its own onsite emergency plan, and State and local governments have detailed plans for both 10 and 50 mile emergency planning zones. These plans are tested in frequent small-scale drills and periodic full-scale emergency exercises that simulate serious reactor accidents. The plans and their implementation are periodically reviewed to confirm that they are being adequately maintained.

Federal oversight of radiological emergency planning and preparedness involves both the FEMA and NRC. Consistent with President Carter's directive in December 1979, FEMA takes the lead in initially reviewing and assessing offsite planning and response and in assisting State and local governments, while NRC reviews and assesses the licensee's onsite planning and response. The NRC reviews FEMA findings on offsite planning and, in conjunction with its own onsite findings, makes a determination on the overall state of emergency preparedness prior to issuing licenses and in continuing oversight of operating reactors.

If in any of its assessments, FEMA finds that offsite plans or preparedness are not adequate, FEMA, by its process, will inform the Governor of the State and the NRC. The NRC will then work with the reactor licensee and with FEMA,

as well as with State and local jurisdictions as appropriate, to address the identified deficiencies. Ultimately, we will take into account information provided by FEMA as well as others in making final determinations. While we are not at this point in the process regarding Indian Point, we are, of course, familiar with the issues raised in the Witt report, as well as other issues raised by FEMA. We will closely monitor steps being taken in the coming months by FEMA, the State, counties, and plant operator, Entergy, to address these concerns.

### **Indian Point**

Speaking more broadly, it is important to note that for several years, we have maintained a heightened level of oversight at the Indian Point 2 facility, especially since an event in which a steam generator tube failed in February 2000. The concerns from that event were principally associated with plant equipment problems, but several emergency response issues also surfaced during the event. We have closely monitored the station's improvement programs through expanded inspection efforts. At the end of last year, we concluded that the most significant of past weaknesses had been substantially addressed. However, as much work remains to be done at the station, we have maintained heightened oversight of the plant.

Emergency preparedness has been a matter of increased public interest since the September 2001 terrorist attacks. A number of questions have been raised about whether county evacuation plans are workable, particularly in light of potential terrorism. On this point, let me say that security of nuclear power plants across the country has been given the highest priority at NRC. Within minutes of the attack, NRC directed plants across the country to go to the highest level of security. While for many years, all nuclear power plants have been required to have security programs sufficient to defend against violent assaults by well-armed, well-trained attackers, numerous additional steps have been taken since September 2001 to thwart terrorist acts. Through formal Orders, NRC has required increased security staffing, posts and patrols, installation of substantial additional physical barriers, greater stand-off distances for vehicle bombs, and more restrictive site access controls, to name only a few of these measures. Indian Point is the most heavily defended plant in the country -- the number of security personnel at the Indian Point facility is significantly greater than the average plant and there continues to be a significant National Guard and State Police presence on site.

NRC Orders have also required licensees to enhance their emergency response plans as appropriate. In this regard, it is important to note that emergency preparedness programs are designed to cope with a spectrum of

accidents including those involving rapid, large releases of radioactivity.

Emergency preparedness exercises have invariably included large releases of radioactivity that occur shortly after the initiation of events. Necessary protective actions and offsite response are not influenced by the cause of accident.

Emergency planning is not predicated on a determination of the probability of a given accident sequence. Rather, emergency planning assumes the improbable has already occurred and develops a response to address the consequences of potential releases. Whether releases from the plant occur as a result of terrorist acts or equipment malfunctions, emergency plans provide an effective framework for decision making and response.

### **Conclusion**

I have described NRC's role in emergency preparedness and discussed our oversight of the Indian Point facility. This concludes my remarks. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.