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- 8/17

Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program

To: Chip Cameron

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Date: 8/17

Number of pages (including cover) 2

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Joan Claybrook, President

October 17, 2001

Chairman Richard Meserve
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Chairman Meserve,

Public Citizen strenuously objects to the suspension of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) website, and urges your immediate action to restore Internet access to public documents.

While federal agencies are prudent to review sensitive information they post online, security concerns cannot justify NRC's decision to indiscriminately block access to its entire website. We are unaware of any materials previously available through the NRC's website that could legitimately be considered a security threat. Indeed, this move seems designed to protect the nuclear industry from public scrutiny without any obvious benefit in terms of national security.

We urge you to reinstate full access to the NRC website immediately. In addition, we request that all scheduled rulemakings and public meetings be postponed and comment periods extended. Notice of these meetings and processes was not readily available from October 11 through October 16, giving the impression that the NRC had suspended public processes. Moreover, the continued inaccessibility of NRC documents formerly available online means that stakeholders lack convenient access to key information related to the regulatory processes currently underway. The possibility of meaningful public participation hinges on the availability of this information.

Public Citizen recognizes the safety and security risks posed by commercial nuclear facilities. To more appropriately and effectively respond to these concerns without compromising public participation in regulatory processes, the NRC should, as a start, upgrade security requirements for nuclear facilities (the Design Basis Threat Regulations), reverse the irresponsible decision to phase out NRC supervision of mock-terrorist attack exercises (the Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation), and more stringently enforce performance standards associated with these exercises. Industry proposals for a "new generation" of nuclear reactors and off-site Independent Spent Fuel Installations should be rejected, as these facilities would increase the number of nuclear targets and thus the overall security risk.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Hugh Jackson
Policy Analyst,
Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy & Environment Program

Ralph Nader, Founder

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