

July 8, 2003

Ms. Stephanie Zessos
186 Lincoln Place, #4
Brooklyn, NY 11217

Dear Ms. Zessos:

I am responding to your letter to President Bush dated May 19, 2003, that was recently forwarded to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). In your letter, you expressed concern that the Indian Point Energy Center is vulnerable to a terrorist attack, yet remains in operation.

The NRC regulations set high standards for effective security programs at nuclear power plants and other sensitive nuclear facilities (described in Part 73 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*). The NRC has required significant protection of licensed facilities against sabotage or attack since the agency's inception. Security has been an important part of the NRC's regulatory activities, with defense-in-depth as the guiding design and operating principle. NRC regulations ensure that nuclear power plants are among the most hardened and secure industrial facilities in our nation. The many layers of protection offered by robust plant design features, sophisticated surveillance equipment, physical security protective features, professional security forces, access authorization requirements, and emergency planning provide an effective deterrence against potential safety or security problems related to terrorist activities that could target equipment vital to nuclear safety.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the NRC has sought to ensure the continued protection of the nation's nuclear power plants. The NRC has been closely coordinating its actions with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of Defense, State and local authorities, the Department of Homeland Security (formerly the Office of Homeland Security), and other intelligence and law enforcement agencies, as well as with NRC licensees. In particular, the NRC staff worked closely with the New York State Office of Public Security when that State office conducted its review of security at the Indian Point facility. NRC coordination with these agencies remains ongoing.

The NRC has taken a number of steps to enhance the already high level of security at the nation's nuclear power plants. These steps include more training for security guards and requiring additional guards at the plants. These and other actions make nuclear power plants even better protected than what had been the best protected commercial facilities prior to the September 11, 2001, attacks. The effectiveness of these security programs has been confirmed by the NRC, as well as other authorities, including the FBI and authorized States. Other NRC actions include issuing: (1) Orders on February 25, 2002, and April 29, 2003, formalizing certain security enhancements, security force fitness-for-duty and training enhancements, and design-basis threat revisions, (2) more than sixty advisories to licensees to describe threat conditions or recommend additional measures, and (3) an NRC Threat Advisory and Protective Measures System, consistent with the Homeland Security Advisory System, to rapidly respond to national changes in the threat environment. During 2003, the NRC continues to take other actions including the resumption of force-on-force exercises designed to test the adequacy of licensee security programs and inspection of licensee's security programs to

S. Zessos

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confirm the enhanced security actions and activities taken by the licensees are effective. A force-on-force exercise is planned at Indian Point in the near future.

Although any security program is open to improvement, the NRC considers the Indian Point facility to be operated safely and the current security posture to be strong. On the basis of the actions taken to date, the NRC does not feel that the operation of the Indian Point facility should be suspended. The NRC continues to actively monitor the situation and is prepared to take measures to ensure the continued safety of Indian Point and all of our nation's nuclear facilities.

Thank you for your interest in these concerns of importance to nuclear power plant security. I hope you find the information in this letter useful.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Cornelius F. Holden, Jr., Director
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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