

October 10, 2003

Mr. Norman T. Cohen
Coordinator
Close The Salem Nukes Now - The Unplug Salem Campaign
321 Barr Avenue
Linwood, NJ 08221

Dear Mr. Cohen:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing in response to your letter dated June 23, 2003, to Congressman Andrews regarding concerns you raised about dry cask storage of spent fuel at the Hope Creek and Salem Nuclear Plants on Artificial Island in Salem County, New Jersey. Your concerns included: (1) NRC's conducting a public meeting to discuss Public Service Electric and Gas' (PSEG's) preliminary plans for dry cask storage, and holding that meeting in NRC's Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, rather than at a location closer to the site; and (2) the need for a dry cask system to be robust, as described in a report entitled "Robust Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel: A Neglected Issue of Homeland Security," dated January 2003.

Regarding your first concern, PSEG requested the June 19, 2003, meeting, held between PSEG management and NRC, to inform NRC of its preliminary plans to construct and operate an Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI) at Artificial Island, using the general licensing provisions of 10 CFR Part 72. Normally, our Spent Fuel Project Office (SFPO) would facilitate a meeting of this preliminary nature and would hold it in our Rockville, Maryland, office. However, staff from SFPO and Region I decided to hold this meeting in our Regional office, to facilitate attendance by interested local citizens. Furthermore, a toll-free telephone number was established and made available to anyone who could not attend the meeting in person. Notice of this meeting was posted on the NRC public web site 2 weeks before the meeting. Two members of the public attended the meeting in King of Prussia and a media outlet from "South Jersey" listened in on the toll-free line. A summary of the meeting and a list of attendees are enclosed and are also available to the public on our Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) (package accession number ML031530197).

At the June 19th meeting, NRC encouraged PSEG to hold frequent local informational meetings on this subject. PSEG indicated it would do so. Meetings that NRC conducts will continue to be open for public observation and efforts will be made to facilitate attendance for all interested parties, in accordance with our public meeting policy.

With regard to the report you submitted and the second concern, about the need for a robust dry cask system, NRC believes that reactor licensees can safely store spent fuel in either spent fuel pools or in dry storage casks at their sites until it can be shipped to an interim spent fuel storage facility or a permanent disposal facility. NRC requires that spent fuel storage systems be designed with a defense-in-depth philosophy, to withstand severe natural phenomena, including earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes. These robust designs provide reasonable

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assurance to NRC that spent fuel storage facilities can be operated safely and that the public health and safety will be adequately protected. NRC will inspect the design, construction, and operation of any ISFSI at Artificial Island, and issue publicly available reports on any findings.

I trust this reply responds to your concerns. Please feel free to contact me if you have additional questions about this matter.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

Enclosures: 1. Meeting Summary (ML031750450)
2. List of Attendees (ML031750485)

cc: The Honorable Robert Andrews

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cc: The Honorable Robert Andrews

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