

October 1, 2003

Ms. Charlene Romaine
162 Mott Farm Road
P.O. Box 188
Tomkins Cove, NY 10986

Dear Ms. Romaine:

I am responding to your letter to President Bush dated June 9, 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's primary mission is to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety. In this regard, the NRC closely monitors nuclear power plants to ensure that they are maintained and operated in accordance with NRC regulations. In particular, the NRC regulations set high standards for effective security programs at nuclear power plants and other sensitive nuclear facilities. 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.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the NRC began a comprehensive review of the threat environment, as well as a review of our requirements for physical protection and security. We have coordinated our efforts with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of Defense, State and local authorities, and other intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Although there have been no credible threats against the nation's nuclear power plants, the NRC has taken a number of steps to further improve the already high level of security, including more training for security guards and requiring additional guards at the plants. The effectiveness of these security program improvements has been verified by the NRC. In addition, the NRC recently conducted a force-on-force exercise at Indian Point designed to identify deficiencies in licensee security programs and to train personnel in the response to an assault. Force-on-force exercises will be conducted at all nuclear power plants on a triennial basis. The results from the Indian Point exercise show that the licensee has a strong defensive strategy and capability that continues to give the NRC reasonable assurance that the facility can be adequately protected against terrorist attacks.

The NRC considers Indian Point to be operated safely and the current security posture to be strong. On the basis of the actions taken to date by the utility and the NRC's oversight, the NRC has concluded that the operation of the Indian Point facility does not need to be suspended. The NRC continues to actively monitor the situation at Indian Point, and all of our nations's nuclear power plants, and is prepared to take measures to ensure the continued safety of those 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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