

April 16, 2004

Mrs. Cynthia Sauer
4730 East Minooka Road
Minooka, IL 60447-9440

Dear Mrs. Sauer:

Your February 4, 2004, letter to President George W. Bush was referred to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Your letter expressed disappointment at our "inability to respond with credible resources" to your concerns and questions, particularly with regard to the cancer statistics in Grundy County, Illinois. As you know, the NRC is responsible for licensing and regulatory oversight including inspection of the Dresden Generating Station located in Grundy County and neighboring Will County. Exelon Generation Company, LLC, is pursuing the renewal of the operating licenses for Units 2 and 3, and this licensing action has afforded you an opportunity to share your views with us. We believe that we are seriously considering your concerns and questions.

My staff had the opportunity to meet with you and your daughter, Sarah, a number of times at NRC public meetings on license renewal during the last year. We are pleased that you had the interest and took the time to provide your insights on the scope of the review of license renewal issues and, more specifically, on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Dresden license renewal application. I understand that my staff also met with you and your husband privately. We certainly appreciate your commitment to become informed about juvenile cancers. In your letter to President Bush, you shared your January 14, 2004, comments on the NRC's draft EIS. As we indicated at the public meeting, the final EIS is expected to be published in July of this year and your comments will be considered in that process before the NRC takes action.

During my staff's private discussions with you and your husband on December 18, 2003, we committed to provide you with information, including information about effluent releases from the Dresden facility to the environment. Prior to the public meeting in January 2004, we provided you with a number of documents. Among these were the effluent release reports submitted by the license holder of the Dresden plant for the previous four years. The reports demonstrate that the quantities released to the environment result in exposures far below the regulatory limits set to protect the public. The potential radiation dose to individuals living at the very edge of the plant's boundary is less than ten percent of the dose from natural background sources of radioactivity and at distances greater than a mile from the plant is less than one percent of background. The effluents are monitored by Exelon and the State of Illinois, and the NRC regularly inspects the monitoring program. In addition, measurements of the amount of radioactive material in air, soil, water, plants, and animals are taken in the environment around the plant; the NRC regularly inspects this monitoring program as well. All of these measurements demonstrate that the effluents are within the limits set to protect the public.

The radiation protection limits were set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the NRC, based on guidance from national and international panels of radiation protection experts. We have every reason to believe that these limits are sufficiently protective of public health. We also believe that the license holder will continue to operate well within these regulatory limits for the duration of its operating licenses; nevertheless, we will continue to inspect the monitoring programs and review the effluent release reports.

We are not aware of a demonstrated link between "radioactive emissions or radioactive byproducts" from nuclear power plants and changes or trends either in cancer population statistics or in juvenile cancer risk that would lead to a change in the radiation protection limits or that would prompt additional epidemiological studies. The potential of a link between nuclear power plant operation and changes on trends in cancer statistics was examined by the experts at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) which is part of the National Institute of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In January 2004, we provided you a copy of the 1990 NCI report "*Cancer Populations Living Near Nuclear Facilities*," which found no evidence that an excess occurrence of cancer has resulted from living near nuclear facilities. That report was prepared in response to the direction of the U.S. Congress.

Likewise, the State of Illinois has reviewed the link between nuclear plant operations and cancer. We provided you a copy of the 2000 Illinois Department of Public Health's Health and Hazardous Substances Registry Newsletter titled "*Pediatric Cancer Incidence and Proximity to Nuclear Facilities in Illinois*," which did not reveal an association between pediatric cancer risks and proximity to nuclear facilities. That report was prepared to investigate suggestions that there is a relationship between the cessation of nuclear power plant operations and a change in health effects.

Since you raised your concerns, we have held discussions with officials at HHS's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The officials concluded that the statistics did not warrant detailed health and epidemiological studies in the vicinity of the Dresden plant. On the basis of these studies and our discussions with HHS officials, we believe our decisions remain credible.

We certainly are concerned about health effects where they are related to the use of nuclear materials and such health effects will continue to shape the standards that are set to protect the general public and the young among us. Protecting the public health and safety is the principal mission of the NRC. The collateral issues that you raised, including NRC enforcement actions involving Exelon and decommissioning funding assurance, are considered in NRC's licensing, inspection and enforcement, and oversight programs. We do believe that we are considering and have been responsive to your questions and concerns. We look forward to your continued interest in this arena.

Sincerely,

/RA/

J. E. Dyer, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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