

March 18, 2005

The Honorable Donald A. Manzullo  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Manzullo:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I want to thank you for providing to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) information regarding an individual's concern with security practices and procedures at the Byron Nuclear Generating Station (Byron). That information was forwarded by DHS to the Department of Energy, which in turn forwarded it to the NRC, which regulates commercial nuclear facilities.

The concern raised by this individual focused on her assessment that Byron's security personnel will not react at all to a helicopter approaching the site since corporate executives routinely use this mode of transport. Accordingly, she requested information regarding NRC staff consideration of this practice in determining the security measures required for nuclear generating stations.

In response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, the NRC initiated new assessments of security and vulnerability at nuclear power plants. In performing these evaluations, the NRC considered many types of actions by a potential adversary, including attacks by various modes of transport. Nuclear power plant licensees are required to implement specific security enhancements and/or measures to thwart an attack on a nuclear power plant that incorporates the full scope of the Design Basis Threat (DBT) as supplemented by Order dated April 29, 2003, and to develop and implement plans to mitigate the potential consequences of a successful attack. In addition, licensees must provide assurance that their emergency planning resources are sufficient to protect the public. The specifics of the DBT for radiological sabotage are considered Safeguards Information under the provision of Section 147 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as amended and are not disclosed to the general public because the information could aid a potential adversary.

The operator of the Byron plant has severely curtailed use of corporate helicopters at the site since September 11, 2001, and strict protocols are currently in place to preclude their use in malevolent acts. Any deviation from these protocols would trigger a response by Byron's security personnel in accordance with pre-established contingency plans.

The NRC closely monitors nuclear power plant activities to ensure that they are operated in accordance with NRC requirements. The layers of protection offered by plant design features, sophisticated surveillance equipment, physical security protective features, professional security forces and access authorization requirements provide an effective deterrent against potential terrorist attacks. Furthermore, the NRC staff continues to review intelligence and threat reporting to assess the need for security adjustments.

Additional information on emergency preparedness, safety, security, and actions taken by the NRC since September 11, 2001, can be found on the NRC website (<http://www.nrc.gov>).

D. A. Manzullo

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Specifically, a publicly available report entitled, NUREG/BR-0314, "Protecting Our Nation Since 9-11-01," provides a broad discussion of the agency's proactive measures undertaken since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

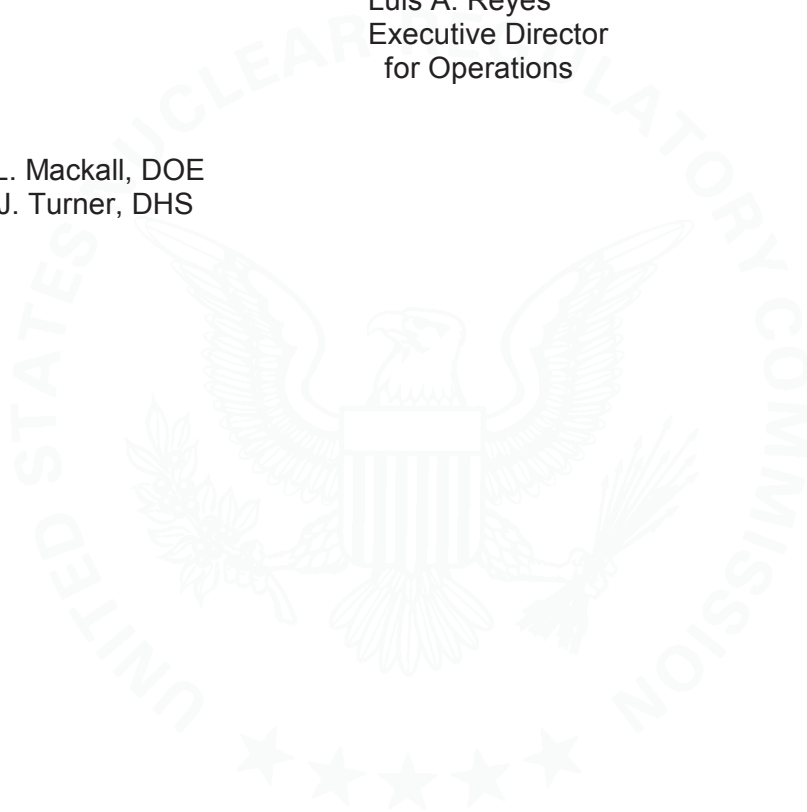
I appreciate your sharing your constituent's concern and your interest in helping to ensure the safety and security of NRC-licensed activities.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Luis A. Reyes  
Executive Director  
for Operations

cc: Brenda L. Mackall, DOE  
Pamela J. Turner, DHS



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