

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM: DUE: 04/18/05 EDO CONTROL: G20050246
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FINAL REPLY:

Representative Frank Pallone

TO:

Chairman Diaz

FOR SIGNATURE OF : ** GRN ** CRC NO: 05-0190

Chairman

DESC:

ROUTING:

Urges the NRC to Take Immediate Action in Response
to the National Academy of Sciences' Report on
Nuclear Waste Security

Reyes
Virgilio
Kane
Merschhoff
Silber
Kane
Burns/Cyr

DATE: 04/08/05

ASSIGNED TO: CONTACT:
NSIR Zimmerman

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

Template: SECY-017

E-RLBS SECY-01

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<http://www.house.gov/pallone>

FRANK PALLONE, JR.
 6TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515-3006

April 7, 2005

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Chairman Nils J. Diaz
 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
 Washington, DC 20555

Dear Chairman Diaz:

I am writing to urge the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to take immediate action in response to the National Academy of Sciences' Report on Nuclear Waste Security. This report raises serious concerns about the vulnerability of spent nuclear fuel pools to terrorist attacks and recommends that specific steps be taken to prevent a significant release of radioactivity, including a plant-by-plant examination of fuel pool design and security.

The report particularly focuses on the fact that an attack no more difficult than the September 11th attacks could easily cause a fire resulting in a radiation release with serious public health consequences. Many of the spent fuel pools at existing nuclear reactors are designed to withstand natural disasters such as earthquakes but were not built to anticipate a well-coordinated assault carried out by a group determined to cause public harm and fear.

I urge that the Commission undertake a careful plant-by-plant analysis of the vulnerabilities of spent fuel pools at individual plants. Different plants around the country use different designs for their reactors and for their spent fuel pools, and it is critical that the Commission use its expertise to ensure that plant operators know the specific steps they need to take to provide the utmost security.

Moreover, the Commission should take immediate steps to ensure that nuclear plants improve the design of their spent fuel pools as necessary, including installing water-spray systems that would prevent a fire if the pool were drained. I also urge the Commission to adopt standards limiting the maximum amount of spent fuel that can be placed in an existing pool and to ensure that plant operators move fuel from pools to dry cask storage as soon as possible.

I also wish to express my concern at your Commission's attitude towards the possibility that spent fuel pools pose serious risks to public safety. You have made comments indicating that you believe fuel pools are as safe as dry casks, but the findings of the experts at the National Academy of Sciences clearly disagree with your position. This raises serious questions about the Commission's commitment to ensuring the highest level of protection for members of the public.

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My state of New Jersey is home to four nuclear reactors, and New Jersey residents are often quite concerned about the safety of nuclear plants in their communities. By taking quick action to act on the recommendations contained in the National Academy's report, you will go a long way towards restoring public confidence in the safety of our nation's nuclear plants.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress