

September 22, 2006

The Honorable John C. Rafferty, Jr.
Pennsylvania Senate
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3044

Dear Mr. Rafferty:

I am responding to your letter, to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Chairman, Dale E. Klein, and the Director of Congressional Affairs, Rebecca L. Schmidt, dated August 17, 2006, in which you raised concerns over the security of spent fuel storage casks at the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant. Specifically, in your letter, you requested NRC to consider earthen berms as Limerick moves forward with their plans to store spent fuel in dry storage casks.

The NRC believes that spent nuclear fuel can be stored safely and securely in above-ground, dry cask storage systems that meet all safety and security requirements, and that such storage does not pose a significant threat to public health and safety. It has authorized such storage at over 40 sites around the country, and some storage facilities have been in service for almost 20 years.

The NRC has aggressively addressed potential terrorist threats to dry cask storage facilities, especially since September 11, 2001, to ensure that these facilities are well-protected from a wide range of terrorist acts. The NRC has issued several orders requiring numerous security enhancements to be made at all types of nuclear facilities, including dry cask storage installations. In addition, NRC has conducted a series of comprehensive security assessments, including detailed structural analyses of the effects of large aircraft crashes into dry cask storage systems. These evaluations indicate that it is highly unlikely that a significant release of radioactivity would occur from a large aircraft impact on a dry spent fuel storage cask. On the basis of these detailed assessments, the additional security measures imposed through orders, and our safety reviews, NRC believes that approved dry cask storage systems for spent nuclear fuel provide reasonable assurance that public health and safety, the environment, and the common defense and security will be adequately protected.

I trust that this letter has responded to your concerns. I want to assure you that NRC will continue to evaluate new information to assure that our programs and requirements provide for safe and secure storage of spent fuel in dry cask storage systems.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Jack R. Strosnider, Director
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

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