March 24, 2010

Mr. Edward Russell
725 Long Pond Road
Plymouth, MA 02360

Dear Mr. Russell:

I am responding on behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your e-mail dated March 3, 2010. In your e-mail, you expressed concerns with age related technical issues at Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station such as tritium and other potential leakage issues and storage density in the spent fuel pool.

Regarding your comments concerning the tritium leaks and spills at nuclear power plants, the NRC has placed additional emphasis on evaluating the licensees' abilities to analyze additional discharge pathways, such as groundwater, as a result of a spill or leak. The agency's resident inspectors, who work full-time at operating U.S. nuclear power plants, regularly monitor all these activities and any deficiencies can trigger more intensive NRC oversight of a plant. Pilgrim has recently installed monitoring wells at the site as a part of the nuclear industry's Ground Water Protection Voluntary Initiative, which covers site hydrology and geology, identification of possible leaking plant structures and methods to monitor their condition, procedures for on-site groundwater monitoring and remediation decision processes, and communication requirements to notify the NRC, State, and local officials of any on-site leaks or spills affecting the subsurface ground environment.

In 2006, an NRC "lessons learned" task force examined previous inadvertent, unmonitored liquid releases of radioactivity from U.S. commercial nuclear power plants. The task force recommended changes in the agency's regulatory program and industry efforts. The task force's findings and the NRC's response are available on the NRC Web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/ops-experience/grndwtr-contam-tritium.html.

In regards to your concerns on the storage density of the spent fuel pool, the NRC limits the number of stored spent fuel assemblies by conditions in the license. Any increase in that number is reviewed and analyzed before the NRC will approve it. In addition, the NRC's safety oversight program for spent fuel storage has been implemented, which is designed to protect the public health and safety and the environment, and safeguard the material from terrorist threats. The oversight program includes inspections and assessments of licensee and vendor activities with a focus on minimizing risk to public health and safety.

Thank you for your interest in these matters.

Sincerely,

/RA/

James Kim, Project Manager
Plant Licensing Branch I-1
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-293

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Sincerely,

/RA/

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