

May 12, 2011

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Blumenauer:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of March 16, 2011, to the NRC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) expressing concern regarding radiation contamination from recent events in Japan reaching the west coast of the United States.

A number of U.S. agencies are involved in monitoring and assessing radiation, including the EPA, Department of Energy (DOE), and NRC. NRC regulations require commercial U.S. nuclear power plants to report any radiation doses detected at the plant that could be harmful to the public. This would include doses that are generated by the plant or by an external source. The EPA and DOE are responsible for more comprehensive radiation monitoring from both foreign and domestic sources.

The NRC is assisting the Government of Japan and responding to requests from our Japanese regulatory counterparts. Through this role and in coordination with Federal partners, the NRC is analyzing data of radioactive emissions. Only trace amounts of radioactive isotopes consistent with the Japanese nuclear incident have been identified through U.S. monitoring; the doses from these trace amounts are far below doses received from natural background radiation and are not a public health concern. Although monitoring will continue, protective measures are not recommended at this time within the United States. The NRC does not expect any U.S. states or territories to experience harmful levels of radioactivity.

If an event requiring protective measures were to occur, U.S. residents would be advised to listen to their State and county authorities, which, in coordination with applicable Federal agencies are responsible for making protective action decisions for public health and safety and communicating these decisions to the public. If necessary and, as appropriate, protective action decisions could include such measures as: preventing contaminated food from reaching the marketplace, recommending that all local produce be thoroughly rinsed prior to consumption, or sheltering or evacuating the affected population. The NRC will continue to work with its local, State, and Federal partners to ensure appropriate emergency response procedures are prepared, reviewed, and carried out in accordance with our regulations.

I hope this information is useful to you. We are continuing to work with our Federal partners to ensure the health and safety of the American people. If you have any additional questions, please contact me or Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

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Gregory B. Jaczko