

June 2, 2011

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air
and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Commission, I am pleased to submit the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) semi-annual report on the status of our licensing and other regulatory activities. Before reviewing our actions, I want to summarize and update the NRC's response to events in Japan. On March 11, 2011, a devastating earthquake hit Japan, resulting in the shutdown of more than 10 reactors in that country. The ensuing tsunami, however, appears to have caused the loss of normal and emergency alternating current power to the six units at the Fukushima Daiichi site. Shortly after 9:00 AM EDT on March 11, we went into the monitoring mode at the NRC's Emergency Operations Center and the first concern for the NRC was possible impacts of the tsunami on U.S. nuclear plants and radioactive materials on the West Coast, Hawaii, Alaska, and U.S. Territories in the Pacific. On that same day, we began interactions with our Japanese regulatory counterparts and began dispatching staff to assist the Japanese Government with technical support as part of the U.S. Agency for International Development response and to support the U.S. Ambassador in Japan. I personally traveled to Tokyo on March 28, to convey directly to my Japanese counterparts a message of support and cooperation, and to discuss the current situation. We continue to monitor the situation and provide on-the-ground assistance in Japan.

As a result of these events, on March 23, 2011, the Commission directed the establishment of a task force to conduct a methodical and systematic review of our processes and regulations to determine whether the agency should make improvements to our regulatory system. This activity will have both near-term and longer-term components. The task force has begun its near-term effort, which consists of a 90-day review to evaluate all of the currently available information from the Japanese events to identify immediate or near-term operational or regulatory issues potentially affecting the 104 operating reactors in the U.S., including their spent fuel pools. The task force's meetings with the Commission will be open to the public as well as webcast. The final report will also be made available to the public. We will keep you informed of the task force's work.

The enclosed report covers the period October 2010 through March 2011. During this time, the NRC issued four renewed reactor licenses. Twelve license renewal applications covering 19 units and 12 combined license applications for 20 new reactor units are under active review. Also during this period, the agency issued annual assessment letters to the licensees for the nation's 104 operating commercial nuclear power reactors. As of March 16, 2010, 101 of 104 nuclear reactors were in the two highest performance categories. This cover letter includes additional information to keep you informed of the breadth of ongoing activities at the NRC.

On October 8, 2010, the NRC issued an updated national report on the safety of U.S. nuclear power plants entitled, "United States of America Fifth National Report for the Convention on Nuclear Safety." This report, which updates a 2007 report, was peer-reviewed by parties to the Convention in April 2011.

From October 18-29, the NRC hosted an international group of 19 senior nuclear regulators as part of the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS), an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) program that assesses a country's regulatory infrastructure against international safety standards and good practices. This IRRS mission was the first in the United States. It focused on technical and policy issues regarding the agency's oversight of operating U.S. nuclear power plants. The IRRS mission provided an independent peer review of the self-assessment by interviewing NRC staff, examining documents, and observing inspection activities. The mission concluded that the NRC has a well-established national policy and strategy for nuclear safety. The report also has recommendations and suggestions for improvement that the NRC will review to determine what actions the agency should take.

In October 2010, NRC published Revision 1 of NUREG-1925, "Research Activities FY 2010-FY2011." NRC's Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research develops technical tools, analytical models, and experimental data with which the NRC confirms the safety of licensed nuclear facilities and assesses regulatory issues for operating reactors as well as for new and advanced reactor designs. This NUREG summarizes the research programs in progress, including fire safety, digital instrumentation and control, human factors, materials performance, risk analysis, and severe accident research.

On October 1, 2010, the NRC issued an operating license to Uranium One Americas, Inc., for the Moore Ranch in situ uranium recovery facility in the Powder River Basin Region of Wyoming. The Moore Ranch facility covers approximately 7,100 acres in northeastern Wyoming. It was the first application for a new uranium recovery license accepted and issued by the NRC in two decades. On December 17, the agency authorized Uranium One USA, Inc., to restart its Irigaray and Christensen Ranch in situ uranium recovery facility in eastern Wyoming, after determining that the company will protect the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment.

Also, in October 2010, the agency put in place enhancements to allow members of the public easier and quicker access to all public documents in its Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). The new interface is transparent, versatile and no longer requires downloading or installing special software to reach any publicly-available document in ADAMS. The new web-based ADAMS allows users to search the full text of publicly available documents published in electronic form, and provides expanded access to over 2.5 million NRC documents including those stored on microfiche or in paper form. Additional improvements to ADAMS are planned.

On November 15, 2010, the NRC issued its Performance and Accountability Report (PAR) for Fiscal Year 2010, and concluded that the agency has met its safety and security performance goals with regard to regulating the nuclear industry and protecting people and the environment. The NRC achieved these goals by evaluating the performance of its licensees and executing licensing and oversight programs to ensure safe and secure nuclear facilities and materials. The PAR did not identify any adverse trends in the overall safety of the industry. The agency also met its security goal through activities designed to prevent any instances where licensed radioactive materials are used domestically in a manner hostile to the security of the United States.

In December 2010, the NRC updated its Waste Confidence Decision with a Commission finding of reasonable assurance that sufficient mined geologic repository capacity will be available to dispose of the commercial high-level radioactive waste and spent fuel generated in any reactor when necessary. The Commission also found reasonable assurance that, if necessary, spent fuel generated in any reactor can be stored safely without significant environmental impacts for at least 60 years beyond the licensed life for operation (which may include the term of a revised or renewed license) of that reactor in a combination of storage in its spent fuel storage basin and either onsite or offsite independent spent fuel storage installations.

In January 2011, the NRC issued the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Nichols Ranch in-situ recovery uranium recovery facility in Wyoming. In February, the NRC issued the Final EIS for the AREVA Eagle Rock uranium enrichment facility in Idaho.

To enhance its ongoing communication with the public and to support Open Government, the NRC's first external blog went live on January 31, 2011. The blog features posts from staff members throughout the agency writing about various topics of interest to the public, and moderated public comments as well. The new blog does not replace formal communications, such as *Federal Register* notices or meeting notices, and will not accept allegations or comments on rulemakings. The complete comment guidelines are available on the blog.

On February 14, 2011, the agency issued new guidance to medical licensees who conduct out-patient treatment of thyroid patients with iodine-131 (I-131) to strongly discourage patients from staying at hotels immediately after treatment. The guidance also reminds doctors of their responsibilities to consider a patient's intended destination and provide instructions on how to limit potential radiation exposures to the public following treatment.

The NRC hosted the 23rd annual Regulatory Information Conference (RIC) on March 8-10, 2011. Co-sponsored by the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, the RIC annually brings together participants from the United States and nations around the world. It provides a unique forum for government, the nuclear industry, international agencies, and other stakeholders to meet and discuss nuclear safety and security topics and significant regulatory activities. Over 3,000 individuals registered for this year's event, the largest number ever.

From October 2010 through March 2011, the agency's Public Meeting Schedule noticed 513 public meetings addressing a full range of NRC issues that were scheduled to be held in the Washington, D.C. area and around the country. The meetings included Commission, Advisory Committee, Licensing Board, and staff-sponsored events. Also during this time, the NRC received 166 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and closed 131 FOIA requests.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the NRC continues to be recognized as an exemplary employer in the Federal Government. In November, the NRC was selected to receive the Adobe and MeriTalk Honor Merit Award for its Knowledge Management (KM) program. This award acknowledges innovations that work toward efficient and effective government communication. This year's award recognized the NRC for its efforts to break down organizational silos and effectively communicate internally by innovative means. The NRC's KM program responds to the need to capture critical information and expertise from its experienced workers before they leave the agency.

Please contact me for any additional information you may need.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Gregory B. Jaczko

Enclosure: As stated

cc: Senator John Barrasso

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air
and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
cc: Senator John Barrasso

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman, Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
cc: Senator James M. Inhofe

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Henry Waxman

The Honorable Ed Whitfield
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Bobby L. Rush

The Honorable John Shimkus
Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment
and the Economy
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Gene Green

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Peter J. Visclosky

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
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United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
cc: Senator Lamar Alexander