

September 20, 2011

Ms. Rochelle Becker
Executive Director
Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility
P.O. Box 1328
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Dear Ms. Becker:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of July 19, 2011. In light of the recent events in Japan and the issuance of the NRC's near-term analysis of those events and their impact on U.S. plants, entitled "Recommendations for Enhancing Reactor Safety in the 21st Century: The Near-Term Task Force Review of Insights from the Fukushima Dai-ichi Accident," on July 12, 2011 (Report), you urged that the Commission provide the NRC staff with the resources and direction needed to fully implement the recommendations contained in the Report as expeditiously as possible.

As you are aware, the Near-Term Task Force was established on March 30, 2011, and its members worked independently, drawing on their substantial experience and their interaction with NRC staff to produce a very important document. The Commission decided that it was vital to determine as soon as possible whether an analysis of the events at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant could identify any imminent safety risks to U.S. facilities. Therefore, as directed by the Commission, the Near-Term Task Force worked on a very compressed schedule without the benefit of agency's usual formal processes for evaluation and without extensive stakeholder input, contact with licensees, and or the formal advice of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. Despite these challenges, the Near-Term Task Force completed a report that highlighted many issues. Most notably, the Task Force found that the current U.S. regulatory approach has served the Commission and the public well and concluded that a sequence of events like those occurring in the Fukushima accident is unlikely to occur in the United States. Therefore, continued operation and continued licensing activities do not pose an imminent risk to public health and safety.

While certain lessons learned from Fukushima can be used to improve the NRC's regulatory framework, the Commission notes that some of the recommendations from the Near-Term Task Force raise very complex technical and regulatory questions. The NRC expects to continue its evaluation using the analytical resources and stakeholder engagement capabilities of the agency to ensure the consideration of many issues. Since the Task Force's briefing to the Commission on July 19, 2011, the Task Force held a public meeting with external stakeholders on July 28, 2011, to solicit public comments. The NRC plans to hold more public meetings, which would facilitate public outreach and transparency of the agency's regulatory process. On August 19, 2011, the Commission issued a Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) SECY-11-0093, "Near Term Report and Recommendations for Agency Actions Following the Events in Japan" by which the Commission directed the staff to engage promptly

with stakeholders to review and assess the recommendations of the Near-Term Task Force in a comprehensive and holistic manner for the purpose of providing the Commission with fully-informed options and recommendations. In addition, on August 22, 2011, the Commission issued an SRM (COMWDM-11-0001/COMWCO-11-0001) that provides further guidance on the engagement of stakeholders regarding the events in Japan.

The NRC is in the process of establishing a senior-level steering committee reporting to the Executive Director for Operations that will oversee the assessment and implementation of the Near-Term Report recommendations and address the items identified for longer-term review. In keeping with the agency's open and transparent processes, the NRC's review efforts going forward will include dialogue with external stakeholders, including public interest groups; the industry; academia; Federal, State, and local agencies; and members of the public.

I want to assure you that the NRC continues to make our responsibilities for the licensing and oversight of U.S. licensees our top priority, and that U.S. plants continue to operate safely. Having completed our near-term evaluation of the relevance of recent events to the U.S. fleet, we continue to gather the information necessary for us to take a longer, more thorough look at the events in Japan and their lessons for the NRC. Based on these efforts, the agency will take all appropriate actions necessary to ensure the continuing safety of the American public.

On behalf of the NRC, I want to thank you for your continued interest in nuclear safety. The public's active involvement in the NRC's processes helps us not only fulfill our mission of keeping the American public safe, but it also helps us do our jobs openly and transparently.

Sincerely,

/RA by Martin J. Virgilio for/

R. W. Borchardt
Executive Director
for Operations

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Executive Director
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