

March 7, 2013

The Honorable John P. Sarbanes  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Sarbanes:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter dated January 14, 2013, forwarding correspondence from your constituent Robert Jacobson regarding agency activities resulting from the Fukushima accident in Japan. Specifically, Mr. Jacobson voiced concern regarding the continued operation of boiling water reactors (BWRs) with Mark I and Mark II containments, and indicated support for the NRC staff's recommendations pertaining to containment vent operability during severe accidents and the use of containment filtration.

We continue to believe that there is no imminent risk from continued operation of nuclear power plants in the United States, including BWRs. At the same time, the NRC's assessment of insights from the events at Fukushima Dai-ichi led us to conclude that additional requirements should be imposed on licensees to increase the capability of nuclear power plants to mitigate beyond-design-basis extreme natural events. Focusing first on actions we believe needed to be taken without delay, the agency issued several Orders, requested additional information from licensees, and initiated two rulemakings. Other possible actions remain under review.

Regarding the use of containment filtration, in accordance with our established processes and practices, the NRC staff provided the Commission with technical analyses, cost/benefit assessments, recommendations, and other supporting information in a paper to the Commission dated November 26, 2012. The Commission asked staff to solicit input from a wide range of stakeholders and requested expert opinion from the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards in preparing to consider this issue. The information provided in the paper, along with other information gathered by the Commission, is being carefully considered during its deliberations.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

R. W. Borchardt  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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