

June 9, 2014

The Honorable Deval L. Patrick
Governor of Massachusetts
Office of the Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of March 17, 2014, regarding your concerns about the safety of Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station (Pilgrim). In particular, you expressed concerns about (1) the evacuation plan for surrounding communities if a major event were to occur at Pilgrim and (2) the recent NRC assessment of Pilgrim's performance.

With regard to your concern about the viability of the evacuation plan for the communities surrounding Pilgrim, onsite and offsite emergency plans are prepared to provide assurance that adequate protective measures can be taken to protect the public in the event of a radiological emergency. The NRC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) share Federal oversight of nuclear power plant emergency preparedness. At least once every two years, Pilgrim is required to exercise its emergency plan with offsite emergency response authorities, including state and local authorities. The exercise is observed, assessed, and evaluated by the NRC and FEMA. This ensures that the licensee and State and local officials remain proficient in implementing their emergency plans. In November 2012, the NRC staff completed an inspection of the Pilgrim emergency preparedness exercise. The NRC staff reviewed procedures and records, observed and assessed activities, and interviewed personnel. As noted in the subsequent Inspection Report¹, the NRC staff examined activities as they related to safety and compliance with the agency's rules and regulations. Following our observation and inspection of the Pilgrim emergency preparedness exercise, the NRC staff concluded that the Pilgrim licensee remains in compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements and that the licensee remains fully capable of implementing its emergency plan in the event of a radiological emergency.

In March 2013, FEMA conducted its biennial full-scale plume exercise in the 10-mile plume emergency planning zone around Pilgrim. The purpose of the exercise was to assess the level of state and local preparedness in responding to a radiological emergency. As a result, FEMA concluded that the exercise demonstrated adequate protection of the public.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has the overall authority for making protective action decisions (e.g., sheltering and evacuation) to ensure the safety of Massachusetts residents during a radiological event. In addition, the Massachusetts Emergency Management

¹ NRC Inspection Report 05000293/2012503, dated December 19, 2012, which is available on the NRC's web site in the Agencywide Documents Access and Management System at Accession No. ML12355A076.

Agency maintains the FEMA-approved State Radiological Emergency Plan for implementing those decisions. Therefore, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a significant role in determining the adequacy of Pilgrim's Emergency Preparedness Program.

With regard to your concern about the recent NRC assessment of Pilgrim's performance, the NRC continuously evaluates plant performance by analyzing inspection findings resulting from the NRC's inspection program and performance indicators reported by the licensee. For calendar year 2013, the NRC concluded that the licensee operated Pilgrim in a manner that preserved public health and safety. Additionally, the NRC has recently increased its oversight of Pilgrim and plans to conduct a supplemental inspection into the causes of recent unplanned reactor shutdowns, the area where a decline in performance was noted. The NRC's additional oversight will ensure that Pilgrim is taking effective steps to correct the performance issues in a timely manner. The results of the inspection will be publicly available in an NRC inspection report in the near future.

Thank you for your interest in Pilgrim. The NRC takes its mission of ensuring public health and safety very seriously. The NRC's regulations and associated licensing, inspection, and enforcement programs provide assurance that all of the Nation's nuclear power plants, including Pilgrim, are operated in a safe manner. The NRC is prepared to take appropriate action, up to and including plant shutdown, to protect public health and safety. Your interest and feedback help the agency to fulfill its mission in an open and transparent manner. I appreciate this opportunity to correspond with you.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Allison M. Macfarlane

cc: John Giarrusso