



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

June 30, 2014

Dr. Lewis Cuthbert  
Alliance for a Clean Environment  
1189 Foxview Road  
Pottstown, PA 19465

Dear Dr. Cuthbert:

This letter is to acknowledge that U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Chairman, Allison Macfarlane, has reviewed your letter dated May 5, 2014, in which you expressed concerns about earthquake hazards at the Limerick Generating Station. The Chairman has requested that I provide a response to address your concerns.

Earlier this year, in another letter to Chairman Macfarlane dated March 31, 2014, your colleagues, from the Alliance for a Clean Environment, expressed similar concerns about earthquake risks at Limerick. The NRC responded to your letter in an e-mail dated April 23, 2014. In that response, we discussed the NRC's process to submit a petition request via Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), Section 2.206. We also discussed the actions that the NRC is taking to further evaluate the number of assertions of NRC staff wrongdoing that were presented in the letter.

With respect to the risks posed by a possible earthquake, the Limerick facility was designed and licensed to reflect the seismic hazards on site. Moreover, the NRC has continued to study seismic hazards since it licensed Limerick as part of Generic Issue 199, "Implications of Updated Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Estimates in Central and Eastern United States on Existing Plants." While updates to seismic data and models have indicated that some plants might have stronger ground motion than originally thought, levels still remain within the plants' safety margins, the overall seismic risk remains small, and adequate protection is maintained. It should also be noted that the NRC does not rank plants by seismic risk.

We continue to examine seismic safety issues at all U.S. commercial nuclear power plants as part of our follow up to the 2011 earthquake and tsunami affecting the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. Among the actions taken by the agency to implement the recommendations of our Near-Term Task Force created following the events in Japan, was issuing request-for-information letters. These letters, issued March 12, 2012, directed each nuclear power plant operator to reevaluate the seismic (and flooding) hazards at its sites using present-day methods and guidance, and to conduct "walkdowns" (visual reviews of the plant's seismic structures) to ensure protection against hazards, which have been completed by the licensees. The initial responses to the NRC's request-for-information on seismic hazards have been submitted by licensees. The NRC staff is reviewing this information to determine what additional evaluations will be necessary for each plant.

The NRC staff continues to have confidence that plants can operate safely while more analyses are done. This confidence is based on our understanding of external hazards, reactor design and construction, and the results from previous inspections and assessments. Nuclear power plants have the capacity to withstand earthquakes larger than those assumed in the

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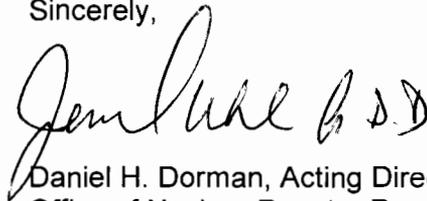
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confirmatory analyses done as part of the licensing process. This additional capacity results from nuclear power plants being designed, with safety margins, to withstand the forces of a variety of internal and external events. Many of these events create larger forces and challenges to plant structures, systems, and components than would be caused by an earthquake at the specific plant locations. The NRC staff is satisfied that plants can continue operation without introducing undue risk to public health and safety pending the additional analyses and possible enhancements that might result from those short- and long-term evaluations.

I understand your concerns, but assure you that the NRC staff is taking all prudent and necessary actions to adequately protect public health and safety. Should information at any time, show that there is a basis to question the continued safe operation of the Limerick Generating Station, the NRC will take appropriate action as part of the agency's ongoing safety oversight.

Thank you for contacting the NRC with your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Dorman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel H. Dorman, Acting Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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I understand your concerns, but assure you that the NRC staff is taking all prudent and necessary actions to adequately protect public health and safety. Should information at any time, show that there is a basis to question the continued safe operation of the Limerick Generating Station, the NRC will take appropriate action as part of the agency's ongoing safety oversight.

Thank you for contacting the NRC with your concerns.

Sincerely,

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Daniel H. Dorman, Acting Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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