

August 15, 2016

Mr. Gregory C. Wilshusen  
Director, Information Security Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
Information Technology  
441 G Street, N.W, Room 4488  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Wilshusen:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report GAO-16-501, "Information Security: Agencies Need to Improve Controls over Selected High-Impact Systems," dated May 2016.

The NRC concurs with the five recommendations provided in the GAO report. The NRC's responses to the recommendations are listed below.

GAO Recommendation 1:

Update security plans for selected systems to ensure that all controls specific to high-impact systems are addressed, including a rationale if the control is not implemented.

NRC Response:

The NRC staff is currently reviewing and updating the security plans for the selected systems as part of the agency's reauthorization and according to agency policy which requires continuous monitoring activities. As a part of this exercise, the NRC is addressing all controls specific to high-impact systems as recommended.

GAO Recommendation 2:

Provide and track specialized training for all individuals who have significant security responsibilities.

NRC Response:

The NRC is validating the current list of staff required to receive training, verifying that existing contracts require the periodic training given by the NRC, and engaging multiple management levels to ensure that required training is completed.

GAO Recommendation 3:

Re-evaluate security control assessments to ensure that they comprehensively test technical controls.

NRC Response:

The NRC is examining GAO's findings along with NRC assessments to identify areas where NRC can improve assessments. The NRC has also recently implemented a new enterprise vulnerability/configuration scanning tool that has enhanced the agency's ability to perform comprehensive system technical control assessments and support ongoing continuous monitoring activities.

GAO Recommendation 4:

Update remedial action plans for selected systems, to include responsible organization, estimated funding, funding source, and scheduled completion dates.

NRC Response:

Having applied additional resources to support these tasks, the NRC will update remedial action plans for selected systems to include the responsible organization, estimated funding, funding source, and scheduled completion dates.

GAO Recommendation 5:

Update the standard that addresses continuous monitoring to include metrics and ongoing status monitoring.

NRC Response:

The NRC is reviewing the continuous monitoring process and will update the standard to include additional metrics and ongoing status monitoring.

The NRC appreciates the opportunity to comment and to explain the actions that the agency has taken in response to the GAO Report. Should you have any questions regarding the NRC's planned actions to implement the recommendations, please contact Mr. John R. Jolicoeur by phone at (301) 415-1642, or email at [John.Jolicoeur@nrc.gov](mailto:John.Jolicoeur@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Stephen G. Burns

cc: David B. Hinchman

**Identical letter sent to:**

Mr. David A. Powner  
Director of Information Technology  
Management Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548  
cc: David B. Hinchman

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz  
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
cc: Representative Elijah E. Cummings

The Honorable Ron Johnson  
Chairman, Committee on Homeland  
Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
cc: Senator Thomas R. Carper

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

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air  
and Nuclear Safety  
Committee on Environment and  
Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
cc: Senator Thomas R. Carper

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman, Committee on Energy and  
Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
cc: Representative Frank Pallone, Jr.

The Honorable Ed Whitfield  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy  
and Power  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 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, DC 20515  
cc: Representative Paul Tonko