

NOV 30 1989

Harriet L. Boyle, Town Clerk
Town of Cortlandt
Municipal Building
Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520

Subject: Emergency Sirens at Indian Point Nuclear Power Station

Dear Ms. Boyle:

I am responding to your letter of October 31, 1989, and the Town of Cortlandt Resolution, #276, dated September 26, 1989, regarding the failure of the Emergency Warning System sirens in Westchester County. This failure, as reported to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, occurred during a regularly scheduled test conducted on September 5, 1989 at 12:30 p.m. and was caused by a failure of both the primary and backup encoders. The encoders, of which only one is required to activate the sirens, send a digitalized coded radio transmission to the sirens. The primary encoder at the Westchester County Emergency Operations Center was found to be inoperable at 9:30 a.m. on September 5, 1989. The backup encoder at the County Warning Point, Hawthorne, N.Y., was disconnected and taken to the primary location but could not be made to operate for the test. One encoder was made to operate at 4:30 p.m., September 5, 1989. The sirens were retested on September 8, 1989, and 73 of the 77 sirens in Westchester County operated. Although four sirens did not operate, overlapping coverage is provided such that the public would have been alerted.

The sirens are only one part of the notification plan developed by the State, County and utilities for use during an emergency at the Indian Point Nuclear Power Station. The sirens alert residents to turn on radios to the Emergency Broadcast Station (EBS). Commercial broadcast messages transmitted over the EBS are the primary means for advising the general public of the conditions of any nuclear accident. If the sirens had failed and had emergency notifications been required, the county would notify appropriate public authorities and the county mobile route notification system, using emergency vehicles, would have been implemented. The Town of Cortlandt was not notified on September 5, 1989, in that it is not on the list of primary notifications and it was not an emergency. However, had it been necessary, the Town of Yorktown (Police) would have performed additional notifications as required which includes the Town of Cortlandt. The Westchester County Radiological Emergency Response Plan provides a full explanation of this concept. On September 5, 1989, upon notification that there were equipment failures, Westchester Emergency Services officials alerted the Westchester County Warning Point at Hawthorne to stand by for route alerting, if required.

The encoders did not function because of a power surge which disabled the power supplies to them. A third activation device is being supplied to Westchester County to ensure against a repeat failure of both devices.

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In order to obtain a more rapid assessment of siren availability at the Indian Point site, the licensees are installing a siren verification system. This system will provide a continuous instantaneous assessment of the availability of all the sirens as opposed to relying solely upon monthly, quarterly, and yearly test. Again, potential siren failure is planned for, and would be ameliorated via route alerting.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission appreciates your interest and concern and the opportunity to respond to inquiries concerning health and safety at nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:

Ronald R. Bellamy, Chief
Facilities Radiation Safety
and Safeguards Branch
Division of Reactor Safety
and Safeguards

cc:

County Executive O'Rourke
State Senator Goodhue
State Assemblyman Pataki
Mr. Stephen Bram, Vice President, Nuclear Power
J. Del Percio, Manager, Regulatory Affairs
P. Kokolakis, Director, Nuclear Licensing
W. Stein, Secretary - NFSC
Department of Public Service, State of New York
Mr. Joseph Russell, Resident Manager
J. Bayne, President and Chief Operations Officer
J. Brons, Executive President - Nuclear Generation
R. E. Beedle, Vice President, Nuclear Support
S. Zulla, Vice President Nuclear Engineering
W. Josiger, Vice President Nuclear Operations and Maintenance
G. Goldstein, Assistant General Counsel
A. Klausmann, Senior Vice President - Appraisal and Compliance Services
D. Halama, Quality Assurance Superintendent
G. Wilverding, Manager, Nuclear Safety Evaluation
M. Peckham, Assistant to Resident Manager
State of New York, Department of Law
Public Document Room (PDR)
Local Public Document Room (LPDR)
Nuclear Safety Information Center (NSIC)
NRC Resident Inspector
State of New York

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Harriet L. Boyle

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bcc:
Region I Docket Room (with concurrences)
Management Assistant, DRMA (w/o encl)
J. Wiggins, DRP Section Chief
L. Tripp, DRP
D. Limroth, DRP
K. Lathrop, DRP
D. Brinkman, NRR
J. Dyer, EDO
R. Barkley, DRP
G. Meyer, DRP
W. Schmidt, SRI - FitzPatrick
L. Rossbach, SRI - Indian Point 2
J. Neighbors, NRR

RI:DRSS

11/2/89

RI:DRSS

Lazarus
11/2/89

RI:DRSS

William
Bellamy
11/29/89

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