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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

September 22, 1993

The Honorable John S. McCain
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

I am responding to your letter of September 1, 1993, regarding an inquiry from your constituent, Royce E. Pettit, Jr., of Tempe, Arizona. He indicated that there were two instances where the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had released news information that was not coordinated with the state and local representatives.

The NRC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) criteria (NUREG-0654/FEMA-REP-1) call for a news media center, including space for state and local public information staff, and for the timely exchange of information among spokespersons. We make every effort to achieve this timely exchange of information in real events and emergency exercises.

The NRC had no previous indications of any problem during the March 14 alert at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, Unit 2. During the alert the NRC Public Affairs Officer in Region V closely coordinated his press activities with Palo Verde public affairs personnel, who were receiving most of the press inquiries and providing most of the press information. The circumstances of the event resulted in NRC activating a Base Team in the Regional office in Walnut Creek, California. Our Public Affairs Officer received copies of all status reports, draft and final press releases from the Joint Emergency News Center in Phoenix by telefax, and commented as necessary. This included direct consultation with a representative of the Arizona Radiation Regulatory Agency to resolve an apparent difference of opinion related to the description of the event.

NRC responded directly to some media inquiries, using information from the NRC Base Team monitoring the event and verifying its consistency with information from the News Center. No separate news releases were issued by NRC.

The NRC was not a player in the April 6 drill. We have been unable to identify any NRC public affairs activity related to that drill.

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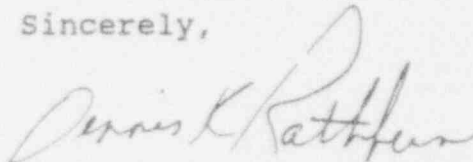
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We will contact Mr. Pettit to discuss the matter further in the interest of improving communications and cooperation among federal agencies, the licensee, and state and local officials, as well as with the news media and public.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dennis K. Rathbun".

Dennis K. Rathbun, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs