



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

January 6, 1999

Mr. Phil Baum, Executive Director
American Jewish Congress
Stephen Wise Congress House
15 East 84th Street
New York, New York 10028-0458

Dear Mr. Baum:

Thank you for your letter of November 13, 1998, regarding the Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation (OSRE) program and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) actions regarding testing of the nuclear power industry's capability to defend against terrorism. You expressed concerns about the reported elimination of the program and requested reconsideration of the decision.

The Commission was not involved in the original staff decision to terminate the program. Following a meeting with the NRC staff on November 10, 1998, I instructed the staff on behalf of the Commission to reinstate the OSRE program with certain changes (described below) and to continue with the evaluations until the staff completes the study it had already started to assess future options in performance assessment of nuclear power plant security. The staff believes that OSRE visits can be resumed in early 1999. By giving priority scheduling to the 11 licensee sites that have not yet been evaluated, the cycle of visits to every nuclear power reactor site should be completed within the next 18 months.

Although the OSRE program has been reinstated, it has been changed in certain ways, effective immediately. The evaluations will place greater emphasis on a regulatory perspective. The emphasis on regulatory requirements will include clarifying the licensee's responsibility to provide security adequate to satisfy the requirement in 10 CFR 73.55(a) to protect against the design basis threat. In accordance with this increased emphasis on regulatory requirements and on the need to protect against the design basis threat, the staff will design and carry out future OSREs to evaluate specifically the protection provided by the licensee's security plan commitments.

The staff will also accelerate its consideration of future options relative to continued evaluation of licensees' contingency response capabilities. It should be noted that there has been no reduction in security requirements, nor has there been any diminution in the NRC's focus on inspection of security plan commitments at power reactor facilities. The staff's goal is to identify more effective methods of testing power reactor licensees' contingency response capabilities, including possible rulemaking and revision of inspection procedures and programs.

Sincerely,

Shirley Ann Jackson

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