

November 1, 2005

The Honorable Sue W. Kelly
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Kelly:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing in response to your letter of August 23, 2005, in which you urged the NRC to assure that Entergy overhauls the emergency siren system for its Indian Point power plant in a more timely and opportune manner. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on NRC's actions to address the siren issues at Indian Point.

In response to the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and in light of recent siren testing and equipment problems associated with the Indian Point alert and notification system (ANS), NRC staff is taking action to require the installation of backup power for the system and to ensure Entergy corrects the recent problems with the system. Entergy provided to the NRC staff written documentation outlining planned actions for these two items, including near- and long-term actions to improve the reliability and availability of the system. This documentation was submitted by letters dated October 25 and 26, 2005. The NRC staff is reviewing this information and will ensure that Entergy's actions are appropriate and effective.

The NRC has scheduled a public meeting for November 16, 2005, at 7:00 pm at Crystal Bay on the Hudson in Peekskill, New York, to discuss Entergy's plans for the installation of backup power and for addressing the recent problems with the siren system. The public is invited to observe this meeting and will have an opportunity to communicate with NRC and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) staff about any concerns with the installation schedule or any other issues related to the licensee's alert and notification system.

Additionally, NRC is partnering with DHS to update the current nationwide technical guidance, Civil Preparedness Guide 1-17 (CPG 1-17), on outdoor warning and mass communication systems. This update is being performed pursuant to direction from the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives set forth in the Committee's report on the Department of Veteran's Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2003. [See H.R. REP. NO. 107-740, at 137 (2002).] The Committee, in its report, directed that "the updated guidance...shall require that all warning systems be operable in the absence of AC power supply." The NRC considers the planned update of CPG 1-17 an important tool to improve the reliability of the nation's alert and notification systems surrounding commercial nuclear power plants.

The NRC is committed to ensuring that the health and safety of the public is protected. The NRC takes the area of emergency preparedness (including reliable and prompt public notification) very seriously, and is promptly moving forward to address both the recent siren outages at Indian Point and the inclusion of backup power in the alert and notification system design. The NRC appreciates and shares your strong interest in protecting the citizens who live in the communities surrounding Indian Point.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Nils J. Diaz