



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

April 11, 2011

Senator James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Dear Senator Inhofe:

This letter responds to your inquiry, dated April 6, 2011, regarding the NRC's response to the events in Japan and, in particular, my actions as Chairman as part of the response to that emergency. The President designated me as Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on May 13, 2009. That designation conferred upon me the executive authorities vested in the chairmanship, including the authority to exercise emergency powers, when warranted.

As the events at Fukushima began to unfold following the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and in light of the presence of U.S. citizens and U.S. interests in Japan, not to mention Japan's status as a close ally to the United States, it became clear that the U.S. Government would have a significant interest regarding this foreign nuclear emergency. The NRC is the U.S. agency responsible for monitoring, understanding, and communicating about nuclear plant safety events, and those core competencies have served an important role in our Government's response to the events in Japan.

The NRC's Headquarters Operations Center has served a key role in assisting the U.S. Government's efforts to monitor the events at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. The Operations Center is intended to be managed during events by a traditional management structure with a single responsible official in charge. My exercise of emergency powers facilitates that process. Also, please note that there are no procedures in place for the full Commission to manage ongoing Operations Center response activities, nor would one expect there to be, given the assignment of responsibility to the Chairman under Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1980. The agency's well-established and oft-tested emergency response procedures serve us well not only in responding to domestic events, but also to international events where NRC's response capabilities can support our government's interests.

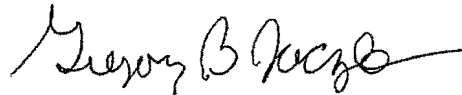
As you note, after the initial threat of potential tsunami effects on U.S. territory had passed, our subsequent activities have focused primarily on monitoring potential radiation reaching the U.S. and on providing advice and assistance within our Government and to Japan. To the extent this is said to involve the exercise of my emergency powers, I have been careful to act in the spirit of the Reorganization Plan, with appropriate regard to existing Commission policy and by keeping my fellow Commissioners informed. With respect to the Japanese emergency, many of the NRC's primary activities have involved communications—an authority the Chairman possesses as official spokesman even in non-emergency situations—and monitoring via the NRC's Operations Center—an executive activity that would also fall within the Chairman's authority to manage as the agency's principal executive officer.

Over the course of the events in Japan, I have maintained regular contact with my fellow Commissioners and have briefed them frequently, both individually and as a group on the latest developments. Event notification emails sent throughout the agency by the Headquarters Operations Center, beginning on March 11, also alerted agency personnel generally that the NRC was responding to the emergency. Press releases issued in the days after the earthquake and tsunami also provided notice to the general public that the NRC was engaging in response activities and that the Headquarters Operations Center was monitoring the events in Japan on a 24-hour basis.

As we take steps to understand any implications of the events in Japan for the regulation and safe operation of nuclear facilities in the United States, I have fully engaged my colleagues to obtain their insights and they supported the direction to the NRC staff to establish a task force to look at the near-term and longer-term implications of the Fukushima event.

I appreciate this opportunity to respond to your questions and trust I have satisfied your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory B. Jaczko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gregory B. Jaczko