

December 12, 2011

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman, Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing in response to your letter of December 5, 2011, seeking my opinion on the work environment, values, and culture at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). I am happy to provide my views to you in advance of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing scheduled for December 14, 2011. In addition, your letter mentions the NRC's all-hands meeting wherein a question was raised by the staff regarding how they should respond to any concerns of abusive behavior or harassment. As I explained to the staff at that meeting, they should be aware of, and mindful of, the potential for inappropriate behavior by any members of the agency. I also reinforced the notion that staff should bring forth any concerns they have to their management, the Office of the Inspector General, or the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights.

1. Do you believe the current work environment at the NRC is consistent with the commission's values and culture? Please provide the basis for, and any examples necessary to inform, your response.

Yes. There are several components to values and culture at the NRC. In conducting all our work, the staff and the Commission adhere to a set of fundamental organizational values: integrity, service, openness, commitment, cooperation, excellence, and respect. These values guide not only our decision making on safety, security, and environmental issues, but also how we perform administrative tasks and interact with our fellow employees and stakeholders. As a responsible regulator with an important safety and security mission, these values guide us in adhering to certain principles in the way we carry out our regulatory activities. We call these our "principles of good regulation," and they include independence, openness, efficiency, clarity, and reliability. In addition, the NRC strives to maintain an open and collaborative work environment that encourages interdependence and the sharing of concerns and differing views without fear of negative consequences. The staff continues to exercise its right to engage in these processes, and during 2011 submitted two formal Differing Professional Opinions and approximately 12 formal Non-Concurrences on documents in the concurrence process.

The most recent barometer of the current work environment at the NRC is the results of the 2011 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. This effort looks at four categories: leadership and knowledge management, results oriented performance culture, talent management, and job satisfaction. The survey measures employees' perception of whether, and to what extent, their organizations have the types of characteristics typically associated with high-performing successful organizations. The NRC ranked first across the Federal government in all four categories.

In addition to the annual OPM survey that will be conducted again in early 2012, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has begun preparations for its next triennial Internal Safety Culture Survey to be conducted next year. This OIG effort is expected to provide additional perspective on the agency's current work environment based on a survey of all employees. We are also continuing to embrace the agency response to the most recent safety culture survey, as well as previous Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys.

2. During your tenure on the Commission, have you observed a change in the NRC management's commitment to its values and culture? Please specifically address any changes to the work environment in terms of openness and collaboration.

In my time on the Commission, there has been a consistent commitment to our values and maintaining an open, collaborative work environment. If anything, I would say that, with all the challenges we have been confronting during 2011 (e.g., the Fukushima nuclear accident, Midwest flooding, Virginia earthquake, and a tightening fiscal environment), we believe that living the organizational values and maintaining an open, collaborative work environment have never been more important. During this time we have sought to encourage and demonstrate an even stronger commitment to these principles and values in support of successful fulfillment of our agency mission.

Earlier this year, our commitment to the agency's culture was strengthened with the establishment of an Agency Culture Advisory Committee. This group of NRC managers will help to ensure that all agency activities and initiatives intended to support a positive agency culture will be effectively integrated and aligned to achieve maximum impact and success.

I look forward to discussing these matters further with you on December 14, 2011.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Gregory B. Jaczko