

November 9, 2011

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Markey:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of October 14, 2011, regarding recent events at the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station near Toledo, Ohio.

As your staff was briefed on October 19, 2011, indications of cracking in the reinforced concrete shield building were discovered during hydro-demolition being carried out to create an access hole for reactor vessel head replacement. The shield building is a 2.5 foot thick free standing reinforced concrete building that surrounds the 1.5 inch thick free standing steel containment vessel. The containment vessel and shield building are separated by a 4.5 foot hollow space. As a result of this physical separation, the indications of cracking in the shield building do not affect the containment vessel. The licensee has formed a response team, including contractor structural experts, to fully investigate the issue. The NRC has inspectors, including a structural expert, onsite and is independently evaluating the information, the licensee's proposed course of action, and the appropriateness of any proposed corrective actions.

The licensee is currently involved in activities to characterize these indications of cracking and determine what further actions, if any, need to be taken to address this issue. Thus far, this has included impulse response mapping of the structure and core boring to define the nature and extent of any cracking.

The NRC's Office of Congressional Affairs will provide your staff with updated information as it becomes available. There is no immediate safety concern as the plant is shut down. Please be assured that if there are challenges identified to the design function of the shield building, the NRC will ensure that the licensee resolves those challenges, consistent with the NRC's licensing bases and technical specifications for the facility, prior to restart of the plant.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Gregory B. Jaczko