

August 11, 2011

The Honorable Bobby L. Rush  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Rush:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of July 15, 2011, regarding events at the Dresden Nuclear Power Station (Dresden) on that date. I appreciated the opportunity to discuss this with you by telephone on July 20; this letter provides a summary and some updated information. As I noted in our conversation, at no time was public safety in jeopardy from this event.

At 10:16 a.m. on July 15, an Alert was declared at Dresden due to a leak of sodium hypochlorite that restricted access to a vital area housing plant cooling water pumps. An Alert is the second lowest of the NRC's emergency level classification. The leak was caused when a pipe on the sodium hypochlorite pump became disconnected. At Dresden, the licensee periodically uses sodium hypochlorite, which is similar to bleach, to help control the growth of biological organisms in those systems that use river water for cooling. Within minutes after the Alert was declared, a plant operator was able to stop the leak.

The sodium hypochlorite pump is located inside of a large area surrounded by a concrete berm that ensures any leaks or spills are contained to prevent release to the environment. All of the sodium hypochlorite that leaked (about 330 gallons) was collected inside of a sump within this bermed area. The Alert was terminated at 3:20 p.m. that same day after air samples taken in the turbine building and the building adjacent to the leak showed that there was no danger to plant personnel. Normal access was then restored to the plant's vital areas. Currently, the NRC Resident Inspector Office at Dresden is reviewing the licensee's root cause evaluation for this event to ensure that all appropriate follow-up actions have been or will be taken.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

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Gregory B. Jaczko