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To the Editor,

Several corrections and clarifications are in order for the story published in the New York Daily News on Dec. 11 regarding a shutdown at the Indian Point 2 nuclear power plant in November (*Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant Officials Say Amount of Radioactive Steam Released was ‘Insignificant’*). They are as follows:

Steam released from the plant's atmospheric steam dump valves, which vent to the environment and help reduce pressure during certain sudden plant shutdowns, did not result from “boiling, radioactive” water hitting the air. Rather, it was produced in the plant's steam generators – large components used to convert heat from the reactor to steam for power-production purposes.

The story conjures up an image of a radioactive cloud hovering over the Hudson Valley in the aftermath of the steam's release. In fact, the amount of tritium, a radioactive isotope, involved in the release was well below allowable federal levels and would be undetectable off-site.

Entergy, Indian Point's owner, has to measure the radioactive content of such releases as they occur. The company must also file an annual report with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on all gaseous and waterborne releases. Regular NRC inspections check on every nuclear power plant's radiation-monitoring and effluent-release programs to ensure their efficacy.

The story states that it took Entergy two days to realize “the valve” was leaking before the plant automatically shut down. It appears “valve” refers to the turbine valve that led to the shutdown. Since no context is provided, however, anyone reading this would likely assume this refers to the atmospheric steam dump valves (plural) even though they did not experience any leakage.

The reality is the atmospheric steam dump valves were intentionally opened (as per plant procedures) as part of the shutdown and, again, the releases from them were monitored and the radioactive content was very low.

Unfortunately, the Daily News' story on the November shutdown of Indian Point 2 came up short in terms of accurately characterizing what occurred, as well as the event's significance and its effects.

Neil Sheehan
NRC Public Affairs Officer