

November 8, 2005

Mr. Henry F. Bedford
3 Peninsula Drive
Stratham, New Hampshire 03885

Dear Mr. Bedford:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, I am responding to your letter of September 29, 2005, to Chairman Diaz expressing your concerns with emergency plan implementation by first responders.

During the Seabrook licensing hearing in 1988, the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (Board), after considering the testimony presented, concluded that school teachers and school officials, as a group, will not abandon their pupils in the event of a radiological emergency at Seabrook. The Board also concluded that emergency workers, as a group, will not abandon their roles in a radiological emergency, those on duty at the time of an emergency will remain on duty, and others will report to duty after seeing to the safety of their families and dependents.

For more than 25 years, NRC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have required emergency plans for nuclear power plants. These emergency plans are evaluated regularly with licensees, Federal, State, and local emergency response organizations. They are routinely updated in response to changing demographics within the 10-mile emergency planning zone (EPZ), lessons learned from exercises, and real events. As a result of these cooperative efforts between the licensees' onsite emergency responders and offsite response organizations, including local law enforcement, the plans are well-known, well-practiced and well-understood. Such rigor in the emergency preparedness process is unique to the nuclear industry, and it leads us to conclude that emergency plans for the 10-mile EPZ are capable of being implemented successfully.

The NRC recently published NUREG/CR-6864 "Identification and Analysis of Factors Affecting Emergency Evacuations" (two-volume set enclosed). This document looks at a large number of evacuations that have been conducted in the United States for many different hazards, including hurricanes, during the period between January 1, 1990, and June 2003. The study revealed that large-scale evacuations in the United States, whether planned or ad hoc, have been successful, saved lives and reduced the potential number of injuries associated with the hazard. An overwhelming factor cited as contributing to evacuation success was a high level of coordination and cooperation among agencies and an effective command structure. Based on broad experience and cooperation with many emergency preparedness organizations, and the results of this study, the NRC continues to have confidence that emergency response agencies, including first responders, will effectively perform their duties when called on.

Although the NRC is confident in the response capabilities of State and local officials, emergency preparedness is a dynamic process, and as such, we continue to seek information to enhance preparedness and the level of the response capability. Further, we are evaluating the lessons from the recent hurricanes to determine what we can learn and how we may enhance emergency preparedness and response. We are also conducting a thorough and systematic review of emergency preparedness regulations and guidance that will take into account the most current information available regarding human behavior in the event of an emergency.

In coordination with other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, we are ensuring the safety, security and emergency preparedness of nuclear power plants in the United States. We understand your concerns, and we want to assure you that we will continue to review the lessons from the recent hurricanes. If you have any further comments regarding this matter, please contact Mr. Eric Weiss, Section Chief, Licensing and Regulatory Improvements, at 301-415-3264.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Nader L. Mamish, Director
Emergency Preparedness Directorate
Division of Preparedness and Response
Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response

Enclosures: As stated

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