

September 1, 2011

The Honorable Herb Kohl
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of July 13, 2011, forwarding correspondence from your constituent, Mr. Dann Sezer. Mr. Sezer expressed concerns about the Midwest flooding, and in particular the impacts on the two nuclear power plants in Nebraska. He asked what was being done to protect public health and safety and the environment at these facilities.

The occurrence of higher than normal water levels in the Missouri River as a result of snowpack runoff and record level rainfall led to the declaration of a Notice of Unusual Event (NOUE) at both the Fort Calhoun Station and the Cooper Nuclear Station in June 2011. An NOUE is the lowest level of emergency classification. Both facilities have implemented their established procedures for flood events. The Fort Calhoun Station had shut down on April 9, 2011, for a scheduled refueling outage and did not restart due to the high river level conditions. That facility remains shut down and will not restart until the Missouri River recedes to a safe level and site conditions allow for a restart. The Cooper facility has been operating at 100 percent power throughout the flooding.

At this time, the high river levels do not present an immediate safety concern, and both facilities have exited NOUE status as the river water levels have subsided. We are communicating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to maintain awareness of any changes to predicted river levels and potential impacts that such conditions might have on the two facilities. The NRC also is maintaining communication with state and local governmental entities. In addition to the two resident inspectors assigned to each site, the NRC had augmented the staff at the Fort Calhoun Station with an NRC Region IV branch chief and three additional inspectors to support a 24-hour coverage schedule until the river levels began subsiding.

The NRC will continue to conduct follow-up activities to protect public health and safety in a manner that allows interested stakeholders to observe and participate as appropriate. The NRC will continue to perform independent assessments of all information and to communicate publicly the basis for its decisions.

Contrary to statements made by some media reports and internet bloggers, no media blackout was instituted regarding impacts to the Fort Calhoun Station due to flooding conditions along the Missouri River. In addition, some outlets erroneously reported there was a "no fly zone" imposed at the Fort Calhoun Station because of a release of radiation. Rather, the Federal Aviation Administration had reiterated guidance in a Notice to Airmen that advises pilots to avoid the airspace in proximity to certain sites, including nuclear power plants.

H. Kohl

- 2 -

Please be assured that the NRC is maintaining close oversight of the situation and will take action as necessary to ensure protection of public health and safety. If you need any additional information, please contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA/

R. W. Borchardt
Executive Director
for Operations

H. Kohl

- 2 -

Please be assured that the NRC is maintaining close oversight of the situation and will take action as necessary to ensure protection of public health and safety. If you need any additional information, please contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA/

R. W. Borchardt
Executive Director
for Operations

DISTRIBUTION: G20110594/LTR-11-0468/EDATS: SECY-2011-0460

RRihm EDO r/f RidsOcaMailCenter RidsOgcMailCenter
RidsEdoMailCenter RidsSecyMailCenter Region4MailCenter

ADAMS Accession No.: ML11243A176

OFFICE	OEDO	OCA	OGC	RGNIV	EDO
NAME	RRihm	JWeil (via email)	STurk (via email)	JDrake (via email)	R.W. Borchardt
DATE	8/31/11	8/26/11	8/29/11	8/26/11	9/01/11

OFFICIAL RECORD COPY