

July 5, 2012

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of May 7, 2012, regarding the availability of radiological monitoring data from commercial nuclear power plants. You specifically asked that we publish year-to-date data for the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) and either modify NRC regulations to require more frequent data reporting or justify why the annual reporting requirements are appropriate.

The NRC has a structured regulatory framework that ensures radiological effluent data are available to the public in a timely manner. Required reporting frequencies range from immediate notification to annual reporting, based on a graded approach that reflects the potential impact of the radiological release on public health and safety. Routine radioactive effluents and releases of very low safety significance may be reported annually, whereas releases that may have greater safety significance or are abnormal may need to be reported more quickly. The NRC is confident that the current system ensures the public will be notified in a timely manner of any releases that could have a health and safety impact.

As you note in your letter, certain monitoring data associated with the steam generator tube leak at SONGS are already available to the public. This includes a licensee event report submitted to the NRC that can be found in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). A copy of that report is enclosed. As described by the licensee, the releases to the environment associated with the tube leak were well below allowable limits. The specific release to the atmosphere via the air injector stack vent represented a whole body dose equivalent to 0.00004% of the NRC limit of 100 millirem per year to members of the public. This dose is roughly equivalent to what an individual would receive skiing for one minute in the Rocky Mountains or spending three minutes in a brick or stone home. The licensee will report additional details about the radiological effluents as part of its annual effluent release report. While the report on the 2012 effluent releases will not be publicly available until next year, when the NRC receives it, we will provide your staff with the data to date.

Please be assured that the NRC takes the protection of public health and safety as its top priority and seeks to maintain a system of radiological data reporting consistent with that mission. If you have any questions, please contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Gregory B. Jaczko

Enclosure:
As stated