



**FEMA**

November 29, 2022

Mr. David R. Padfield  
Director  
Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency  
1310 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110

Dear Director Padfield:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) identification of a Level 1 Finding, which was assessed to the Columbia County Emergency Management Agency (CCEMA) during the October 18<sup>th</sup> Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (SSES) Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) Exercise, was successfully re-demonstrated during a remedial exercise conducted on November 29, 2022.

As you are aware, a deficiency was identified in development, approval, and release of emergency information for the public and news media contained in media releases during the October 18, 2022, biennial plume exercise. The Level 1 Finding was assessed under Capability Target 1.2 (Direction and Control) and Capability Target 3.3 (Emergency Information and Instructions to the Public and News Media) as described below:

**Capability Target 1.2:**

During the October 18, 2022, exercise one of the County Commissioners created a disruptive environment by focusing on termination of the exercise. The Commissioner present at the Columbia County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) pressured the Emergency Management Coordinator, the exercise evaluation team, and the exercise controller to hasten exercise play and threatened to terminate the exercise and release staff from the EOC prior to the completion of all required demonstrations/evaluations. The Commissioner's action led to some staff departing prior to the County meeting exercise objectives. This action may have also contributed to a lack of a media briefing being conducted.

Further, the Columbia County Commissioner(s) are responsible for the release of prepared instructions for the public at the time of an emergency associated with the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station. The Commissioner present at the EOC did not conduct a thorough review of media releases, specifically Media Releases #10 and #11, which contained inaccurate protective actions for the public, and approved the release of these inaccurate messages. Without adequate review and approval of media releases, the public would have received conflicting information from different sources for evacuation and

KI information. This could have led to some members of the public not following the correct protective action issued by the Governor of Pennsylvania.

### **Capability Target 3.3:**

During the October 18, 2022, exercise, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania made a protective action decision (PAD) that recommended all persons in the 10-mile emergency planning zone to evacuate and ingest KI. Prior to that, a protective action recommendation (PAR) was provided by the licensee, Talen Energy, to the Commonwealth which recommended persons to evacuate 0-2 miles 360 degrees around the plant, and 2-5 miles in the downwind sectors (A, B, C, D, E, Q and R). The Columbia County EOC incorrectly acted on the PAR issued by Talen Energy and issued Media Release #10 at 2029 that instructed persons in a 360-degree radius, 0-5 miles from the plant to evacuate and ingest KI. Then, to correct Media Release #10, issued Media Release #11. Media Release #11 was also incorrect and stated that persons in a 360-degree radius from the plant 2-5 miles, in sectors A, B, C, D, E, Q and R to evacuate. Sectors A, B, C, D, E, Q and R are wind sectors, and these are not contained in the emergency information brochure provided to residents living in the emergency planning zone, and were not explained in a special news bulletin, media briefing, or media release. Additionally, the Columbia County EOC failed to conduct a media briefing, which is required in the Columbia County Radiological Emergency Response Plan and required under the negotiated Extent-of-Play Agreement for the exercise. There were no clarifying statements or media briefings conducted that could have clarified the error. This conflicting information provided by Columbia County could have led some members of the public to not follow the correct protective action issued by the Governor.

Following the issuance of the Level 1 Finding, corrective actions were implemented, which included additional training for staff and revision of procedures for drafting and approving media releases. These plan changes were submitted to the FEMA Region 3 office for review and were determined to be adequate.

During the remedial exercise, staff from CCEMA successfully demonstrated the implementation of the revised procedures and validated that the revisions are effective at preventing an erroneous media release from being disseminated. The revised checklists clearly identified responsibilities by all parties involved in the creation and release of media releases. There were two Columbia County Commissioners participating and they were responsible for oversight and approval of all media releases. There was healthy discussion and collaboration between the PIO, EMC, and Commissioners regarding the content of the media releases prior to dissemination.

There was a total of four media releases developed by CCEMA and two media briefings were held. FEMA evaluators served as mock media and asked questions related to the postulated radiological release and incident at the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station. All questions were answered adequately by the spokespersons, which included the County Commissioners, Public Information Officer, and Emergency Management Director.

Based on the results of the exercise and a review of the offsite radiological emergency response plans and procedures submitted, FEMA Region 3 has determined they are adequate (meet the planning and preparedness standards of NUREG-0654/FEMA-REP-1, Revision 2, December 2019, as referenced in 44 CFR 350.5) and there is reasonable assurance they can be implemented, as demonstrated during the remedial exercise.

Because the remedial exercise was conducted within 75 days of the Level 1 Finding, the results will be captured in the After-Action Report (AAR). There will be no need for FEMA to produce

a separate report for the remedial exercise.

If you have any questions, please contact Thomas Scardino at (215) 931-5546.

Sincerely,

MARYANN E TIERNEY

Digitally signed by MARYANN E  
TIERNEY

Date: 2022.11.30 10:58:15 -05'00'

MaryAnn Tierney

Regional Administrator