

Aug. 13, 2004

To the Editor:
Wilmington (N.C.) Star-News

To clarify issues in a Star editorial Aug. 13, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has aggressively met the post 9-11 threat to ensure nuclear plants are as safe as possible, and we are always open to new ideas.

Since 9-11 the NRC has ordered plants to sharply boost plant security to face a greater threat; further restrict site access and conduct vehicle checks at greater stand-off distances; improve plant response to explosions and fires; improve guard readiness, training and qualifications; improve, make more realistic and conduct nearly three times as often tests of plant defenses; and the NRC has greatly improved its liaison with the intelligence community and other government agencies. These steps are well-known publicly.

Nuclear plants are among the most hardened commercial structures in the country. Reactors are well-equipped to withstand an aircraft attack, and these additional NRC actions go a significant way toward protecting both plants and their spent fuel pools. Moreover, new NRC studies show that a significant release of radioactivity from a terrorist attack on a spent fuel pool are very unlikely, and it is highly unlikely a significant release would occur from an aircraft attack on a dry spent fuel storage cask. Even if there were a release, sufficient time exists for protective and mitigating actions.

The Star wrote "the usual suspects are once again fear-mongering." No argument here!

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