

March 4, 2002

The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515-2107

Dear Congressman Markey:

I am responding on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letters of November 15, 19, and 27, 2001, regarding actions taken by the NRC and the nuclear industry in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Your letter of November 27, 2001, states that it appears that the NRC downplayed the risk of a terrorist attack on a nuclear reactor and the potential consequences of such an attack in the period after September 11. Your letter referenced statements made by the NRC and a study conducted by Argonne National Laboratory. In the aftermath of the September 11 attack, staff was asked a number of questions and sought to provide immediate responses. The NRC's statements reflected a sincere attempt to be responsive.

During the initial response to the events of September 11, 2001, our intent was to provide the best available information to a wide range of questions and concerns. The subsequent responses to similar questions may have caused confusion when they noted that past NRC reviews had not specifically contemplated attacks by aircraft such as a Boeing 757 or 767, and that nuclear plants were not designed to withstand such crashes. The statement that "detailed engineering analyses of a large airliner crash have not yet been performed" was in the context of situations similar to those of September 11. The 1982 study written for the NRC by Argonne National Laboratory (ANL), and others conducted during that time frame, did not consider attacks or deliberate acts using aircraft, as opposed to airplane accidents, nor did they consider aircraft as large as the Boeing 757 or 767.

The questions you raised in the three letters are very wide-ranging. As a result, rather than summarize the responses here, I refer you to the enclosures for detailed responses to each of your questions. Responses to questions you raised in your letter of December 4, 2001, will be provided in separate correspondence.

As you know, the NRC is conducting a thorough re-evaluation of its security requirements and programs. This re-evaluation will include the control of information that could potentially assist individuals who may attempt to sabotage a licensed facility. Although the staff's re-evaluation is not yet complete, we have responded to your questions with information that is deemed to be sensitive information. Responses that do not contain sensitive information

-2-

are provided in Enclosure 1; responses with potentially sensitive information are provided in Enclosure 2, with markings indicating that the information is not for public disclosure. Accordingly, these pages should not be made publicly available.

If you have further comments or questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Richard A. Meserve

Enclosures:

Enclosure 1: Responses to Questions (non-sensitive information)

Enclosure 2: Responses to Questions (sensitive information)