

May 2, 2000

The Honorable Sue W. Kelly
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-3219

Dear Congresswoman Kelly:

I am responding to your letter of March 24, 2000, concerning the steam generator tube failure that occurred at Indian Point 2 on February 15, 2000. The Commission appreciates your concerns, and we are taking actions to fully understand and address lessons learned from the event.

You requested a meeting to receive an explanation as to how the circumstances specified in the NRC's independent study conducted by the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES) occurred, and the effect on plant safety. You asked that we include details as to what actions will be taken to prevent similar occurrences and requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission require the installation of the newer steam generators at Indian Point 2.

As you know, a meeting was held on March 29, 2000, in response to your request. You had discussions on that occasion with Hubert Miller, the Region I Regional Administrator, Ashok Thadani, Director of Research, and Roy Zimmerman, Deputy Director of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, on these issues. I trust that you found these discussions to be informative.

With respect to corrective actions to prevent similar occurrences, the NRC has initiated, but has not completed, its lessons-learned assessment of the technical or process elements associated with its review of past steam generator issues. The issues documented in the RES independent study will be considered, along with the insights gained through the NRC's on-site inspection and the licensee's steam generator tube examinations and root cause failure analyses. The results of the lessons-learned assessment will then be used to identify any generic technical or process elements that may improve NRC's review of steam generator issues. It is expected that this assessment will be accomplished within 2 months of completing our review of the licensee's inspection results and root cause failure analysis.

The NRC sets minimum requirements that must be met by ConEd to assure protection of public health and safety. The NRC will oversee ConEd's steam generator tube inspections, repairs, and other corrective actions to assure these public health and safety requirements are met. Since ConEd's current steam generator inspections have determined that more than one percent of the tubes inspected are defective, the Indian Point 2 license requires NRC approval prior to restart. In addition, the NRC has scheduled a meeting with ConEd on May 3, 2000, to discuss information provided in their root cause evaluation of the steam generator tube failure event. The plant will not restart before ConEd demonstrates that NRC requirements have been met and the NRC specifically approves restart.

With respect to your request regarding the installation of the new steam generators currently on-site at IP2, the Union of Concerned Scientists has submitted a petition to the NRC requesting the steam generators to be replaced. In general, a plant operator can meet NRC requirements on steam generator tube leakage through a number of methods, including by repairing or plugging defective tubes. However, the NRC is carefully reviewing the petitioner's request that NRC require replacement of the steam generators. The NRC decision on this request will be made available to the public when it is completed. In addition, a public meeting will be held in the vicinity of the plant to discuss the staff's evaluation of the Indian Point 2 steam generators prior to restart.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve