



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 20, 2018

The Honorable William R. Keating  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Keating:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your November 20, 2018, letter concerning recent NRC inspection reports issued for the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station (Pilgrim). We appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns. The NRC remains committed to ensuring that Pilgrim operates – and will be decommissioned – in a way that protects public health and safety.

The NRC continues to dedicate significant attention and inspection resources to Pilgrim to ensure that the licensee, Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc., operates the plant safely. Following the plant's placement in Column 4 of the NRC's action matrix, the agency has focused additional attention on Pilgrim and conducted thousands of hours of inspection to evaluate safety at the site and licensee efforts to improve performance. The NRC staff's current assessment is that Pilgrim remains safe to operate and that Pilgrim's performance has improved, although the sustainability of that improvement remains under NRC review. The NRC will continue to closely monitor Pilgrim's performance through the end of its operational life and throughout decommissioning until such time that the spent fuel is removed from the site and the license is terminated.

As plants approach permanent shutdown, the NRC increases focus on areas such as the corrective action program and deferred maintenance to ensure that these areas receive appropriate attention. As you note, the NRC staff's third quarter integrated inspection report for Pilgrim documented an issue in one of these areas; the licensee incorrectly classified some condition reports as "non-adverse." When an issue is placed in a less significant category, different controls are in place to ensure timely corrective actions are made. Further, the licensee's processes directed the cancellation of "non-adverse" corrective actions under certain circumstances. NRC inspectors reviewed a number of condition reports that were incorrectly classified as "non-adverse" and found that two of the work orders associated with the incorrectly classified condition reports had been canceled. For these two condition reports the equipment remained capable of performing its required function and, therefore, these issues were characterized as minor. The licensee subsequently entered the items into Pilgrim's corrective action program and new work orders were written. Since these issues were minor, they were documented as observations in the report rather than as findings.

The NRC had also carefully assessed the issue you highlighted regarding air leakage in the standby gas treatment system. After evaluating this issue under the agency's process for determining the significance of inspection findings, the NRC staff concluded that it was of very low safety significance (a green finding). This rigorous process considers that other plant

equipment remained available at the time of the leak to prevent and mitigate the consequences of a radiological accident.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or have your staff contact Eugene Dacus, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Svinicki', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kristine L. Svinicki