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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-2107

August 29, 2011

The Honorable Greg Jaczko
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Chairman Jaczko:

I write to urge the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to re-evaluate and, as necessary, upgrade the protections against hurricanes and other extreme weather events in light of the multiple challenges faced by nuclear power plants during Hurricane Irene this past weekend. I additionally ask once again that you immediately move to adopt the recommendation of NRC's Near-Term Task Force Report^[2] on Fukushima to require the re-evaluation of seismic and flooding hazards every 10 years and address any new and significant information to ensure that nuclear power plants are protected against these hazards.

Hurricane Irene's strong winds presented considerable challenges to numerous nuclear power plants:

- Calvert Cliffs Unit 1 (MD) nuclear reactor shut down automatically after a large piece of metal siding blew off a building and contacted high energy lines associated with a main transformer. One of its emergency diesel generators was found to be inoperable due to flooding of its circuitry, and 66 out of 73 emergency sirens at the plant were out of service.
- The power at Millstone Units 2 and 3 nuclear reactors (CT) was reduced as a precaution, the spent fuel pool at the decommissioning Unit 1 lost power for its cooling system, and Unit 3 lost one of six water circulation pumps.
- The Oyster Creek (NJ) nuclear reactor shut down as a precaution, and 10 of 42 emergency sirens lost function.
- 51 of 97 emergency sirens at Peach Bottom nuclear power plant (PA), lost function.
- 49 of the 172 emergency sirens at the Indian Point nuclear power plant (NY) and 74 of 113 emergency sirens at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant (MA) had to be placed on backup battery power
- An off-site electrical line to the Surry nuclear power plant in VA was lost.
- The power at the Brunswick nuclear power plant in NC was reduced as a precaution.

^[2] <http://pbadupws.nrc.gov/docs/ML1118/ML111861807.pdf>

The NRC's July 12 Task Force report recommended that protections to address seismic and flooding threats at each nuclear power plant be periodically revised to incorporate the most up-to-date information regarding those threats. It also observed that the "Extreme Damage Mitigation Guidelines (EDMGs)" adopted at nuclear power plants after the attacks of September 11 2011 in order to mitigate the impacts of a terrorist attack did not consider the potential for the same impacts to be caused by extreme weather events such as hurricanes.

In light of the widespread challenges to nuclear power plants caused by Hurricane Irene, as well as the potential that global warming could increase both the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as hurricanes, I urge you to quickly incorporate hurricanes and other strong storms into the safety and emergency response upgrades the Commission is currently undertaking.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please have your staff contact Dr. Michal Freedhoff of my staff at 202-225-2836.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Edward J. Markey