



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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LISA P. JACKSON
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April 8, 2008

Honorable Daniel M. Van Pelt
Assemblyman, District 9
620 West Lacey Road
Forked River, New Jersey 08731

Dear Assemblyman Van Pelt:

I am writing in response to your March 3, 2008 letter regarding the radiation monitors around Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station. I appreciate the opportunity to update you on what the Department of Environmental Protection (Department) is doing to resolve problems with data transmission from several of these remote monitoring sites and actions taken to minimize the impact of Internet outages.

First, the Department has addressed all issues with regard to replacement or repair of radiation detection equipment at the monitoring sites located on Oyster Creek's property. We maintain a total of nineteen real-time monitoring sites around Oyster Creek and five of those continue to experience failures with transmission of data back to the central computer in Trenton. Three of these five are located on Oyster Creek property and transmit data via onsite cables owned by Oyster Creek. The failures lie in the extensive network of overhead and underground telephone cables that connect the radiation monitoring equipment at the telephone pole to an onsite telephone closet. From there, the data is transferred to AT&T and Verizon transmission lines that carry it to our central computer system.

Oyster Creek management is aware of the problems and has received approval for a project that will resolve the communication failures onsite. The Department and Exelon management met on March 20 to discuss the implementation of the project work plan. The underground cabling repair project will be underway in the near future and is scheduled for completion during the second quarter of 2008.

The fourth radiation monitoring site that is currently inoperable is located on Route 532 at what was formally Waretown Cemetery, now known as Ocean County Memorial Park. When the property owners began extensive development in 2003, they worked with Department staff to relocate the telephone pole and related monitoring equipment to accommodate our needs. Recent site requirements to include a drainage swale in the front of the property have impeded our maintenance (bucket) truck from accessing the pole housing the radiation monitor to replace a failed modem. The owner has again offered to support us in moving the pole to a location on the property that is accessible to our bucket truck and plans are underway towards that end.

The fifth radiation monitoring site that is not currently transmitting data is located near the public restrooms northeast of the plant and adjacent to the Forked River. As with all other radiation monitoring sites around Oyster Creek, the telephone circuit that transmits the data back to Trenton is owned by AT&T, which hands it off to the local service provider, Verizon. There is a failure somewhere between AT&T's and Verizon's portions of the circuit, but the location and cause of the failure have not yet been identified. Staff continues to work on finding and resolving the problem with AT&T and Verizon.

As part of the contract to upgrade the central computer system that acquires and processes the radiation data from our monitoring sites, the Department is piloting a test site using wireless data transmission instead of leased telephone lines. This pilot has been largely successful since it was deployed, and iterations of troubleshooting and debugging have identified and resolved problems that have surfaced during the testing period. We are hopeful that other monitoring sites around Oyster Creek can be upgraded to wireless data transmission. Deployment may begin in the next several months, depending on the availability of equipment and resources. Without exception, sites that have chronic communication failures such as the ones discussed above will receive priority replacement status.

When the Department experienced an Internet outage in January, this single wireless test site lost communications with the central computer in Trenton. Verizon has investigated the outages that also impacted other Trenton businesses and repaired the faulty hardware. In conjunction with the State Office of Information Technology, alternate designs of network connections and the computer system's interface with the Garden State Network are being considered to minimize the possibility of future interruptions.

Thank you for sharing your concerns with me. We are confident that our multi-layered monitoring strategy that includes thermoluminescent dosimeters, environmental sampling, field monitoring teams ready for deployment in the event of an emergency, as well as these real-time radiation monitors, will safeguard the public from radiological releases from any of New Jersey's nuclear generating stations.

Sincerely yours,



Lisa P. Jackson
Commissioner

c: Nancy Wittenberg, Assistant Commissioner, Environmental Regulation
John W. Hazen, Director, office of Legislative Affairs
James L. Laird, Director, Public Affairs, Exelon Corporation