

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,  
RANKING MEMBER

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN  
OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS,  
RANKING MEMBER



**Nita M. Lowey**  
**Congress of the United States**

**17th District, New York**

May 13, 2015

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Stephen G. Burns  
Chairman  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
11555 Rockville Pike  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Chairman Burns,

As you may be aware, on May 9 a transformer caught fire at the Indian Point Energy Center in Buchanan, NY, causing the shutdown of one of Indian Point's reactors. Entergy, the plant's operator, issued a Notification of an Unusual Event, which is the lowest emergency classification, to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). This is merely the latest in a long history of safety lapses. Some of the most egregious examples include:

- In 2000, a leak in a steam generator released radiation and officials forced Con Edison, the previous operator, to shut down the reactor and declare an alert. Con Edison had knowledge that the steam generator leaked radiation for several weeks but did not take corrective action.
- In April 2003, a fire broke out in the main turbine of the non-nuclear area of the plant within hours of a power failure and caused the shutdown of both reactors.
- In December 2003, the NRC reported that Indian Point had three times as many unplanned shutdowns in a 12-month period as any other plant in the nation. The report cited insufficient quality control and poor contractor oversight.
- In April 2007, the NRC downgraded the safety assessment of Indian Point 3 after a transformer fire forced the second shutdown in a one week period and the fourth in a one year period.
- In August 2007, new sirens repeatedly failed to sound during tests. The following year, a report by outside experts hired by Entergy stated that the "entire siren upgrade program was not conducted with the rigor demanded of a regulatory-driven major nuclear plant project."
- In November 2010, a transformer at Indian Point 2 exploded, causing a fire and automatic shutdown of the reactor.

Despite these problems, which now include three transformer fires, the NRC has provided Indian Point with exemptions for certain fire safety standards. I implore the NRC to work with its relevant partners to conduct a thorough investigation to study the factors that led to the May 9 fire and the safety risks the fire created, including environmental health impacts, as well as provide a detailed list and justification for all safety exemptions the NRC has provided Indian Point.

As the NRC considers relicensing both Indian Point reactors, it is vital that everything possible be done to ensure the safety of the surrounding area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nita M. Lowey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Nita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress