

February 10, 2000

Mr. William D. Travers  
Executive Director for Operations  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Reference: Your letter of September 30, 1999

Dear Mr. Travers:

I am pleased to inform you that, in keeping with the spirit of the cooperative agreement between the NRC and EPRI in the area of Nuclear Safety Research, the industry has decided to participate in the CABRI Water Loop Project to obtain data for burnup extension beyond the currently approved limit of 62GWd/T. The industry will provide its share of the cost in support of the CABRI project and, through EPRI, will actively participate in planning and monitoring this research effort. Rosa Yang of my staff will work with Ashok Thadani to finalize the details of the industry's participation.

As you know, the U.S. utilities asked EPRI in 1998 to establish the Robust Fuel Program to proactively address fuel-related operational and regulatory issues. Since then, the NRC and EPRI have collaborated successfully in defining the test plan for confirming the criteria for LOCA (loss-of-coolant accidents). The Limerick fuel rods required for this program have arrived at the Valecitos hot cells and will be delivered to ANL for LOCA testing in March this year.

In support of the desire to improve economics by extending fuel burnups beyond the current limit of 62 GWd/T, the industry is in the process of developing a systematic plan that will include schedule and strategy. We believe that it is essential to use a risk-informed approach to determine experimental conditions, the amount of data needed, and the regulatory criteria for the reactivity-initiated accidents (RIA). The Robust Fuel Program's Executive Committee and Working Group 2 intend to hold meetings with the NRC to discuss these issues in more detail. In fact, a meeting with the staff has already been scheduled for March 30 this year to provide information on work in progress.

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We look forward to further collaboration with the NRC on R&D projects, such as the CABRI and LOCA projects mentioned above, where the NRC and industry agree that the data to be obtained are of mutual interest and that sharing the cost of the test program is appropriate.

Sincerely,



Robin L. Jones  
Vice President, Science & Technology

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c: R. Beedle, NEI  
T. Marston, EPRI  
A. Thadani, NRC  
R. Yang, EPRI