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

March 16, 2000

CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Fred Thompson
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Thompson:

As you know, the Commission, on February 24, 2000, decided to move the Technical Training Center (TTC), including all four simulators, from its current location in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to a location in close proximity to the NRC headquarters. The Commission noted in that decision that the NRC training program can be improved by co-locating the TTC in the headquarters area to ensure that these NRC assets are utilized to their fullest potential, and it directed the staff to take actions to implement this decision.

In responses to Congressional inquiries, the Commission articulated several of the reasons supporting its decision. Specifically, the Commission felt that in order to meet the agency's many regulatory challenges, it was imperative that the agency establish a more robust technical training program in Rockville where a majority of its workforce is located. Moving the TTC and its simulators to NRC headquarters was viewed as a means of enhancing the level of training for the headquarter's staff who currently do not take full advantage of these simulators because of the travel concerns involved. The Commission also recognized that the rapidly changing regulatory environment and the emergence of new technologies would require our training staff to work more closely with NRC technical subject experts, and to be more aware of current agency activities and perspectives which could then be more easily integrated into training courses. By placing the simulators in Rockville, the agency would also have much greater access to these resources in the event of an accident at a plant.

The Commission recognizes that there are opposing views in Congress. We have also been informed that the General Accounting Office (GAO) intends to study the merits of moving the TTC to Rockville, Maryland.

The Commission believes that it has a sound basis for its TTC decision and is concerned about any action that could delay its efforts to improve the agency's training program. However, in light of developments in Congress, we believe that it would be appropriate to delay implementing the decision to move the TTC until the GAO has had an opportunity to conduct an independent evaluation of this issue. We have directed our staff to take no action on this

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matter until the GAO has issued its report and the Commission has had an opportunity to review its recommendations.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Meserve