September 19, 2000

Ms. Pamela Blockey-O'Brien
7631 Dallas Highway
Douglasville, Georgia 30134

SUBJECT: REPLY TO MAY 29, 2000, LETTER TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Dear Ms. Blockey-O'Brien:

By letter dated May 29, 2000, you submitted a petition pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 2.206 which requested that Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant (Hatch), Units 1 and 2, be permanently shut down and that their licenses be permanently revoked. By letter dated July 7, 2000, we informed you that your submittal did not meet the criteria for consideration under 10 CFR 2.206, but that we would provide you responses to all of the issues that you raised. During a June 15, 2000, conference call, you provided to members of the Petition Review Board additional bases for your petition and answered questions raised by the NRC staff. You also provided additional bases for your petition in other correspondence which include a June 4, 2000, letter to the License Renewal Application Section; a June 15, 2000, letter to the Executive Director for Operations (EDO); a June 15, 2000, note to the NRC and Mr. Leonard N. Olshan; and a June 18, 2000, letter to the Executive Director for Operations.

You raised concerns that in the event of a nuclear accident at Hatch: (1) the children in the Altahama school and the children in Appling County and in the surrounding counties may die or be damaged for life; (2) fast evacuation would be impossible; (3) the local fire and rescue facilities are ill-equipped to deal with the emergency; and (4) the containment is inadequate and may fail.

Since the first three issues involved offsite emergency preparedness, we asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance. We sent FEMA your original petition and the additional correspondence that you provided. By letter from Mr. V. E. Quinn to Mr. K. H. Gibson (Enclosure), dated August 17, 2000, FEMA provided their response to your concerns. FEMA concluded that the Appling County Emergency Management Agency Radiological Emergency Plan to respond in case of a radiological incident is adequate to protect the health and safety of the public.

For the fourth issue, the inadequacy of the containment, you referenced additional material, such as the Reed Report and NUREG-1079, "Estimates of Early Containment Loads from Core Melt Accidents." In response to concerns with Mark I containments, which are used at Hatch, the NRC, in July 1980, issued a report, NUREG-0661, "Safety Evaluation Report, Mark I Containment Long-Term Program." As a result, Hatch implemented modifications to the two containments. By letter from Mr. J. F. Stolz to Mr. J. T. Beckham, dated January 25, 1984, the NRC concluded that the licensee's analysis "verified that the containment modifications made have restored the original safety margin to the Mark I containment at the Hatch Plants." Therefore, we conclude that the containments at Hatch, in conjunction with other structures, systems and components which are important to safety, are adequate.

You raised concerns about two events: (1) the June 15, 1999, manual scram with subsequent multiple equipment failure, and (2) the January 26, 2000, event, which you call a loss-of-coolant accident (LOCA).

An NRC Special Investigation Team evaluated the June 15, 1999, event and issued "NRC Special Team Inspection Report No. 50-321/99-10 and 50-321/99-10" on July 20, 1999.

An NRC Augmented Inspected Team evaluated the January 26, 2000, event and issued "NRC Augmented Inspection Team Report 50-321/00-01 and 50-366/00-01" on February 28, 2000. You characterize this event as a LOCA. LOCA is defined in Appendix A to 10 CFR Part 50, which states, "Loss of coolant accidents mean those postulated accidents that result from the loss of reactor coolant at a rate in excess of the capability of the reactor coolant makeup system from breaks in the reactor coolant pressure boundary, up to and including a break equivalent in size to the double-ended rupture of the largest pipe of the reactor coolant system." The January 26, 2000, event did not involve a break in the reactor coolant pressure boundary; the decrease in reactor vessel water level was caused by a partial loss of feedwater when a valve unexpectedly closed. Furthermore, the reactor coolant makeup system, in this case the High Pressure Coolant Injection system, automatically started and reactor vessel water level was rapidly restored; thus, the loss of reactor vessel water level was not at a rate in excess of the capability of the reactor coolant makeup system. Therefore, the NRC does not consider the January 26, 2000, event to be a LOCA.

Neither the June 15, 1999, event nor the January 26, 2000, event posed a threat to the health and safety of the public, nor did they result in any releases of radioactivity.

We trust that this letter is responsive to your concerns. Should you have any questions or comments regarding these matters, please call Mr. Leonard N. Olshan of my staff toll-free at 1-800-368-5642.

Sincerely,

/RA/

John A. Zwolinski, Director
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: As stated

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John A. Zwolinski, Director
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: As stated

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