

October 10, 2000

Mr. Clinton Bastin
987 Viscount Court
Avondale Estates, GA 30002

Dear Mr. Bastin:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to your e-mail dated August 25, 2000, and your letter dated July 31, 2000.

In your August 25 e-mail, you raised questions about the merits of geologic disposal of spent nuclear fuel and other high-level radioactive wastes, and proposed the need to consider alternatives to geologic disposal as part of the nuclear fuel cycle. I appreciate your interest and concern on these matters, however, consideration of these matters is beyond the scope of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) mission.

The United States Congress, taking into account the advice of the National Academy of Sciences, has established geologic disposal as a matter of national policy. Consistent with this policy, NRC is an independent regulatory agency responsible for determining whether any potential geologic repository, if ever proposed by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), would meet NRC's regulations as they relate to public health and safety, and the protection of the environment. Regarding your views on spent fuel reprocessing, there was once a prohibition on domestic reprocessing, however, the prohibition policy was rescinded by President Reagan; and the private sector is not undertaking reprocessing at this time. Finally, you refer to the use of breeder reactors and excess weapons-grade plutonium. Again, these are matters beyond NRC's mission. NRC is not responsible for deciding how many or which types of nuclear power reactors are to be built. Rather, such decisions rest with the private sector. In the example of using weapons grade plutonium to initially load any possible future breeder reactor, those decisions are likely to involve Congress, and not NRC.

In your July 31 letter, you provided an information copy of your recent letter to Secretary of Energy Richardson concerning information in a series of reports prepared by DOE. The NRC staff agrees with the importance of providing the public with full and accurate information on nuclear energy issues. We are not in a position to comment on your specific claims regarding these particular DOE reports. However, my staff has contacted DOE to ascertain its plans for responding to your concerns. The Department has assured us that a response is under development.

Mr. C. Bastin

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The NRC staff is committed to ensuring that the public has complete and full access to information used by it in nuclear regulatory matters. For future reference, NRC's mission, statutory authority, and many staff initiatives are described on NRC's external web site (<http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/public.html>).

I trust this reply responds to your concerns.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William F. Kane, Director
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Mr. C. Bastin

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