



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

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRMAN

March 12, 1986

The Honorable Lee M. Thomas
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Thomas:

The purpose of this letter is to confirm the commitment of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to assist EPA in its development of Federal guidance on residual radioactive contamination criteria and/or methodology for governing the unrestricted release and potential reuse of a wide range of contaminated lands, facilities, equipment, and materials generated in conjunction with nuclear activities. The NRC urgently needs such guidance and we believe other Federal agencies, such as the Departments of Energy and Defense, would also benefit significantly from such guidance.

In previous NRC staff correspondence to EPA staff, it was noted that, in view of the broad range of facilities and agencies involved, the development of EPA guidance on acceptable residual radioactive contamination criteria and methodology for evaluation of proposals should be a careful, deliberative process based on consultation with implementing agencies, including agencies with regulatory responsibilities and those agencies which must actually perform cleanup and decontamination operations. This broad range of agencies and facilities and the need for a careful, deliberative development process are the major reasons for encouraging EPA to issue such guidance in the form of Federal guidance approved by the President. It was also noted in this earlier correspondence that the guidance should be general and not facility or activity specific, that it should identify and address both principles and implementing factors which must be considered (i.e., costs, "as low as reasonably achievable" considerations, basic health and safety limits, etc.), and should establish acceptable methods for their use by the Federal agencies.

The July 30, 1985 response by Charles L. Elkins, Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, is very encouraging and provides a firm basis for EPA/NRC cooperation in this area. I am pleased to note that EPA plans to continue its work in developing Federal guidance for release of land and buildings for use without restrictions based on residual radioactivity and for designating low-level waste streams which have radioactivity levels that are "below regulatory concern." It is also encouraging that the EPA staff is exploring the possibility of addressing some of our immediate needs for criteria on recycling materials and equipment without restrictions based on residual radioactivity on an earlier schedule than originally planned. We agree with the EPA's priorities as stated by Mr. Elkins, and appreciate his cooperative approach.

Honorable Lee M. Thomas

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The efforts already underway at EPA will be very helpful to NRC in its efforts to properly regulate decommissioning and waste disposal activities. We recognize that the recycle of slightly contaminated materials is a difficult issue, but one which is important worldwide. I hope you will be able to find additional resources to work on its resolution. The NRC is prepared to provide staff support to EPA's efforts in analysis of issues which are particularly pertinent to the activities which we regulate.

While arrangements for our cooperative efforts with you are being worked out by our respective staffs, I want to confirm the NRC's commitment to assist you in the resolution of these important issues.

Sincerely,



Nunzio J. Palladino
Chairman