

Mr. Walter A. Simon
 Sr. Vice President
 Nuclear Projects
 General Atomics
 Building 1-240
 3550 General Atomics Court
 San Diego, CA 92121-1122

April 16, 2001

Dear Mr. Simon:

Thank you for your letter of March 22, 2001, on the potential commercialization of the Gas Turbine - Modular Helium Reactor (GT-MHR) which is being designed and developed under the sponsorship of the Department of Energy and others. In your letter you request that the NRC staff engage in exploratory discussions with General Atomics on how to proceed with a licensing review of the GT-MHR. Your letter indicates that these discussions are intended to address a licensing plan that you will be developing later this fiscal year.

In response to your letter, I have requested the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, in cooperation with the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, to take the lead for early interactions with you. The purpose of such early interactions would be to become familiar with the GT-MHR design, its supporting technology, and related safety issues with a goal of seeking early resolution of issues fundamental to the GT-MHR design. In this regard, the staff plans to build upon its previous advanced reactor review work, including its earlier experience with a pre-application review of a DOE-sponsored modular high-temperature gas-cooled reactor.

We look forward to the opportunity to hear about the GT-MHR and to discuss plans for further interactions. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Ashok C. Thadani, Director, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (301-415-6641).

Sincerely,
 /RA/

William D. Travers
 Executive Director
 for Operations

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