

July 3, 2001

Dr. Theodore U. Marston
Vice President & Chief Nuclear Officer
Electric Power Research Institute
P.O. Box 10412
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Dear Dr. Marston:

In the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Agency Program Plan for High-Burnup Fuel (July 6, 1998), it was concluded that it would be appropriate for the industry to generate data to support acceptance criteria and assessments for burnup extensions beyond the current limit of 62 GWd/t. Nevertheless, it was stated that the NRC would consider cooperation with the industry in the data phase of such test programs. Interpretation of data would be done independently.

As you know, we have been having discussions at the staff level about extending the testing we are doing with Electric Power Research Institute's (EPRI's) cooperation at Argonne National Laboratory to include newer fuel types. This work not only addresses high-burnup fuel issues for reactor use but also for dry storage. We believe that EPRI is interested in continuing to work with NRC and perhaps other partners in a new phase of testing of fuel with M5, ZIRLO, and perhaps Zircaloy Duplex cladding, and we want to continue our planning in that direction.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that I have recently sent letters to Framatome and to Westinghouse inviting them to collaborate with NRC and other industry representatives in generating data to address high-burnup fuel issues for reactor use and for dry storage. In addition, I have sent a letter to Mr. Ralph Beedle at the Nuclear Energy Institute informing him of this correspondence. We think that this type of cooperative testing is an efficient, cost effective method to confirm expectations of cladding performance under accident conditions. We look forward to continued cooperation with EPRI on this program and will work to make arrangements that you can continue to find acceptable.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

ADAMS Package ML011860140

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