

November 21, 2001

Dr. Kenneth D. Bergeron
17 Tierra Monte NE
Albuquerque, NM 87122

Dear Ken:

Thank you for your letter of September 13, 2001, regarding the ongoing U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff review of Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA's) license amendment request to irradiate tritium-producing burnable absorber rods (TPBARs) at the Watts Bar plant. It was nice hearing from you and meeting with you at NRC headquarters on November 7, 2001. We appreciate your continued interest in nuclear safety, and value the insights you gave to the staff when you met with them. We understand your concerns and will assess them further as part of our license amendment review.

Our next step will be to issue *Federal Register* notices (in accordance with Title 10, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Section 50.91) of TVA's amendment requests of August 20, and September 21, 2001, to irradiate TPBARs in the Watts Bar and Sequoyah reactors. These notices do not indicate that the NRC has reached any conclusions about the acceptability of TVA irradiating TPBARs in the Watts Bar and Sequoyah reactors. Rather, the notices alert interested parties to TVA's amendment requests, and give the public 30 days to comment or request hearings on the proposed amendments. The notices also specify whether the NRC may hold hearings (if requested and granted) before or after issuing the amendments, provided the NRC determines the amendments to be acceptable. TVA cannot irradiate TPBARs in their reactors unless the NRC approves TVA's license amendment requests.

Please contact L. Mark Padovan at (301) 415-1423 or Richard Correia at (301) 415-1009 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Brian W. Sheron, Associate Director
for Project Licensing & Technical Analysis
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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