

May 23, 2002

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-4801

Dear Congressman Mollohan:

I am responding to your letter of March 28, 2002, regarding the interest of Mr. Wayne Bartley and the UCAR Carbon Company's in the uses of graphite in nuclear waste vitrification and advanced nuclear reactors. Representatives of the UCAR Carbon Co., recently provided a presentation on these topics to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) at the Nuclear Materials Safety and Security Colloquium on Advanced Reactor Graphite Technology. The NRC staff found it informative. Regarding waste vitrification, NRC does conduct independent audit reviews of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE)'s repository activities. However, DOE has the responsibility for proposing and assessing the various attributes of alternatives to waste processing. Appropriate DOE contacts in this technical area are listed in the enclosure to this letter.

In your letter, you also refer to a nuclear "bubble" reactor. While we are not aware of any technology known as a bubble reactor, there are several reactor technologies that have certain graphite components. The NRC's role regarding reactor design is to evaluate license applications for safety and conformance to the regulations. For example, the NRC has recently conducted a limited pre-application review of a technology known as pebble bed modular reactor (PBMR). However, in the NRC regulatory process, a reactor license applicant would be responsible for choosing specific components and vendors. Information, regarding a potential vendor's need for specific products is best obtained directly from such vendors.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

Enclosure: DOE Contacts for Uses of Graphite in Nuclear Waste Processing

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 Executive Director
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*See previous concurrence

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