

December 4, 2001

Release

Mr. William W. Ascroft-Hutton
CChem, FRSC
HM Superintending Inspector of Nuclear Installations
St. Peter's House
Stanley Precinct
Balliol Road, Bootle
Merseyside L20 3LZ
United Kingdom

Dear Bill:

Thank you for arranging very rewarding meetings during our November 12-14, 2001, United Kingdom (UK) visit. Our discussions of both the UK's experience with gas-cooled reactor technology and the role of British Nuclear Fuels Limited in the South African Pebble Bed Modular Reactor Project were very informative. I also appreciate your personal involvement and effort you and your staff made in making the meeting a success. Additionally, the reports and insights received from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) during our visit will enhance our understanding of this technology. Thanks also for arranging the meeting with Helen Leiser which was likewise enlightening and insightful.

We realize that NII's experience with gas-cooled reactors, specifically with respect to the use of graphite under high-temperature and irradiated conditions, is of interest to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. We understand that NII has established a center of excellence for graphite technology at Manchester University. We would like to learn more about the graphite research capabilities and ongoing projects at the university to assess its potential applicability to NRC's graphite technology infrastructure development needs. NII's plans to establish an international collaborative group to coordinate and share research results on graphite technology is also of interest to us, and we would like to participate in these discussions

We also discussed cooperation for developing codes and standards related to the design, manufacture, and properties of graphite materials. Exploring this further with NII is also an area of interest to us, in addition to understanding the historical experience associated with the use of graphite in gas-cooled reactors in the UK. Consistent with the agreement reached during our visit, we are planning to have a meeting in Washington early next year followed by a meeting in the UK to explore these areas further.

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W. Ascroft-Hutton

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Thank you for the delightful visit we had to your beautiful home, and of course, our encounter with your wonderful Irish Wolfhounds, an experience that both John and I will not soon forget. Please express our sincere appreciation and best regards to your wife for the warm hospitality that made our visit a very enjoyable experience.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

cc: L. Williams, Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

W. Ascroft-Hutton

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/RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

cc: L. Williams, Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

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