

December 4, 2001

Peter Readle, Director  
Commercial Projects  
British Nuclear Fuels plc  
Risley  
Warrington  
Cheshire WA3 6AS  
United Kingdom

Dear Peter:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership and participation in the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001, meeting between the NRC delegation, Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII), and British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL). The meetings and discussions were truly informative. Our discussions of the BNFL role in the South African Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR) Project was of specific interest to us, and the discussions shed light on many of the questions we had on the project.

I noted the comments made during the meeting on the need to maintain independent analytical code capability in order to gain confidence in new reactor designs. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission subscribes to this approach and plans to implement it for the PBMR. We still find that the best way to understand a new technology is through the development of computer codes and models and experiments that support the technical basis for the models.

We are looking forward to your report on key parameters affecting fuel performance, and hope to receive a copy of the report through NII. We recognized the need to fully understand TRISO fuel particle performance in making regulatory decisions, and any related information along those lines would be greatly appreciated. We continue to press for completeness in understanding the margin for failure in fuel performance. There is much to be gained, however, in sharing all test data, and in seeking consistency in both test and experimental results.

Once again, thank you for a delightful visit. Please also extend my sincere appreciation to your colleagues for their technical support and participation.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director  
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

cc: L. Williams, Nuclear Installations Inspectorate  
W. Ascroft-Hutton, Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

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