



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

NOV 08 1994

Mr. Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
High-Level Waste and Uranium
Recovery Projects Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Holonich:

We have received and studied your letter of September 14, 1994, that outlined problems with the topical report process between the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Department of Energy (DOE). We agree that procedural problems with the first two topical reports on extreme erosion (YMP/92-41-TPR) and our seismic hazard assessment methodology (YMP/TR-002-NP) need some improvements on our part.

There are two major improvements which we will act upon. One is that we will ensure that the subject matter in future topical reports is parallel with the outlines we send to explain a topical report's scope and content, and which are the basis for NRC's scoping review. Both topical reports we have sent to NRC suffered in this area. Second, DOE will provide all of the primary data supporting the conclusions in the topical reports themselves. Delay in NRC's review of the extreme erosion topical report occurred as we retrieved the original data from our Technical Data Base. It was only after submittal of the topical report to NRC that we were apprised by the staff that NRC intended to perform a completely independent analysis. We did not realize that providing this capacity to NRC and its contractors was a requirement for a review to be concluded.

Beyond this, from our perspective, the topical report process is working fairly well. Responding to NRC's questions is a necessary part of the process. We are now preparing responses to your questions and comments on both topical reports. For the extreme erosion topical report, we intend to respond to NRC's questions, or provide the requested data, before the end of February 1995. For the seismic topical, we intend to provide the additional information before December 1, 1994, enabling NRC to initiate its review.

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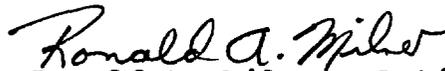
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We regarded the October 7, 1994, Management Meeting by videoconference as a very productive interaction, both in concept and specifically with regard to these two topical reports. The concept of such a meeting to further explain and elaborate on NRC's questions and comments, and what potential actions we might take to resolve the staff's concerns is good. Specifically, it enabled us to better understand your questions and comments in order to better respond to them.

I hope this letter provides the type of DOE insights you elicited in your September 14, 1994, letter regarding the topical report process. With this reply, we hope to fulfill the verbal action agreed to at the September 21, 1994, Management Meeting to explore the weak points in the topical report program with the goal of improving this bilateral process.

If you have any questions, please contact Christian Einberg at 202-586-8869.

Sincerely,



Ronald A. Milner, Acting Director
Office of Program Management and
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cc:

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