

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM: DUE: 07/17/03 EDO CONTROL: G20030355
DOC DT: 06/06/03
FINAL REPLY:

Richard Shelby
United States Senate

TO:

Dennis Rathbun

FOR SIGNATURE OF : ** GRN ** CRC NO: 03-0402

Travers

DESC:

ROUTING:

Concerning Regarding Browns Ferry

Travers
Paperiello
Kane
Norry
Dean
Burns/Cyr
OIG File
Reyes, RII

DATE: 06/26/03

ASSIGNED TO: CONTACT:
NRR Collins

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

TEMPLATE EDO-001

E-RIDS Code EDO-01

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

Date Printed: Jun 25, 2003 07:52

PAPER NUMBER: LTR-03-0402 **LOGGING DATE:** 06/25/2003
ACTION OFFICE: EDO

AUTHOR: Richard Shelby
AFFILIATION: SEN
ADDRESSEE: Dennis Rathbun
SUBJECT: Allegations concerning Browns Ferry

ACTION: Signature of EDO
DISTRIBUTION: Chairman, Comrs

LETTER DATE: 06/06/2003
ACKNOWLEDGED: No
SPECIAL HANDLING:

NOTES: Allegation Material
FILE LOCATION: Safe

DATE DUE: 07/17/2003 **DATE SIGNED:**

EDO --G20030355

RICHARD SHELBY
ALABAMA

CHAIRMAN—COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING,
AND URBAN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

CHAIRMAN—SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

110 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0103
(202) 224-5744

<http://shelby.senate.gov>
E-mail: senator@shelby.senate.gov

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0103

June 6, 2003

STATE OFFICES:

- 1800 FIFTH AVENUE NORTH
321 FEDERAL BUILDING
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35203
(205) 731-1384
- HUNTSVILLE INT'L AIRPORT
1000 GLENN HEARN BOULEVARD
BOX 20127
HUNTSVILLE, AL 35824
(256) 772-0460
- 113 ST. JOSEPH STREET
445 U.S. COURTHOUSE
MOBILE, AL 36602
(251) 694-4164
- ONE CHURCH STREET
ROOM C-561
MONTGOMERY, AL 36104
(334) 223-7303
- 1118 GREENSBORO AVENUE #240
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35401
(205) 759-5047

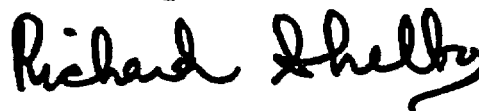
Mr. Dennis Rathbun
Director
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Congressional Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Rathbun:

Enclosed, please find a copy of correspondence I received from Jon M. Owings.

Please review the enclosed and address the concerns raised. I have notified my constituent to expect a timely reply directly from you.

Sincerely,



Richard Shelby

RCS/bgb
Enclosure

RICHARD SHELBY
ALABAMA

CHAIRMAN—COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING,
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
CHAIRMAN—SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

110 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0103
(202) 224-5744
<http://shelby.senate.gov>
E-mail: senator@shelby.senate.gov

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0103

June 6, 2003

Dr. Jon M. Owings
111 Jenni Leigh Drive
Huntsville, Alabama 35806

COPY

Dear Dr. Owings:

Thank you for taking the time to contact me regarding your concerns.

I have contacted the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on your behalf and have asked them to respond to your concerns. You should expect a reply to your concerns directly from the agency in a timely manner. Please do not hesitate to contact me about this or other matters in the future.

Sincerely,

Richard Shelby

Richard Shelby

COPY

RCS/bgb

STATE OFFICES:

- 1800 FIFTH AVENUE NORTH
321 FEDERAL BUILDING
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35203
(205) 731-1384
- HUNTSVILLE INT'L AIRPORT
1000 GLENN HEARN BOULEVARD
BOX 20127
HUNTSVILLE, AL 35824
(256) 772-0460
- 113 ST. JOSEPH STREET
445 U.S. COURTHOUSE
MOBILE, AL 36602
(251) 694-4164
- ONE CHURCH STREET
ROOM C-661
MONTGOMERY, AL 36104
(334) 223-7303
- 1118 GREENSBORO AVENUE #240
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35401
(205) 759-5047

Jon M. Owings, MD, FACS
111 Jenni Leigh Dr.
Huntsville, AL 35806
256-830-9038

386240

1 of 2

521839

29 May 2003

Senator Richard Shelby
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

RE: TVA Browns Ferry

Dear Senator Shelby,

I have personal knowledge of a dangerous situation existing at the Browns Ferry Nuclear Facility near Athens, AL. I know about this because of close personal contacts at Southern Manufacturing Group (SMG), a Morrison, TN company I cofounded in 1993 but sold out of in October 2001 after being recalled to active duty with the Air Force. I also have a personal interest in that my wife and I, our children and their families all reside within a 30 mile proximity and we are not anxious to be that close to another Three Mile Island or Chernobyl.

Since going into service in 1974 TVA Browns Ferry has had serious ongoing problems with their boiling water reactors' (BWR) pressure relief system, which was designed and is still supported by a subcontractor, Target Rock/Curtiss Wright flow controls. Steam corrosion in the steam pressure safety system causes deterioration and sticking of the reactor's main steam pressure relief valves (MSRVs) which results in constant leakage of steam and can allow serious over pressurization if sticking valves can't release at upper safe limits.

Four years ago SMG was engaged by TVA to develop a solution after Target Rock, despite numerous entreaties by all the other GE BWR facilities, who not surprisingly have the same problem, and general contractor General Electric, had failed to solve the problem after numerous attempts at redesign and other modifications. After two years of R & D SMG produced a new valve made of advanced fine ceramic to replace the present of platinum coated Stellite (a stainless steel alloy). In February 2001 SMG's new valve was tested for safety and usability and passed all to TVA's satisfaction.

In spite of TVA and other BWR operators' acceptance and desire to replace the old valve with SMG's and the approval of General Electric, it is not going to be installed. The reasons are unclear but relate to Target Rock's refusal to approve the new ceramic valves even after receiving all necessary test data and specifications, and TVA senior managements' unwillingness to listen to their own engineering staff and install it anyway.

2 of 2

TVA engineering, in desperation, has asked a French company, Atwood Morriel/Weir Valves, to design a new safety system to be installed in the Unit 1 Browns Ferry reactor is now refurbishing to bring back on line ASAP, completely replacing the original Target Rock designed steam pressure safety system. There is no assurance of course that the new design will work any better if even as well as the present and certainly will be many times more costly and delay early startup of the third reactor.

I have information that Browns Ferry has developed another leaking valve and must shut the reactor down ASAP for repairs; until then, a single leaking valve can cost \$10-20,000/day in steam lost as well as create a significant safety issue if the valves should stick and allow a significant pressurization. An unscheduled shut down for repairs, which occurs with disturbing frequency in all GE BWRs due to Target Rock MSRVs, can result in a cost/lost revenue of >\$1,000,000/day,

Upon my release from military service last year I learned of this impasse which is now approaching meltdown and request your urgent investigation. This is a critical issue that must be resolved now and it appears it is going to take pressure on TVA top management to effect it or just wait until a major catastrophe happens to force the issue. I think the former is preferable and if the news media learns of this debacle as they surely will in the latter, the consequences will not be in any one's best interests.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel if just the valve stem is bad, and SMG has invented a new one that works. You may contact me or SMG President Ray Jones at 931-686-5377 and we can supply you with names and phone numbers of contacts at TVA and in the nuclear industry who can verify what I am reporting

Very truly yours,

Jon M Owings, MD