

Mr. Mario P. Fiori, Manager  
 Savannah River Operations Office  
 Department of Energy  
 P.O. Box A  
 Aiken, SC 29802

September 13, 1996

**SUBJECT: SAVANNAH RIVER SITE HIGH-LEVEL WASTE TANK CLOSURE:  
 CLASSIFICATION OF RESIDUAL WASTE AS INCIDENTAL**

Dear Mr. Fiori:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has received your letter dated August 28, 1996, requesting Commission review of the Department of Energy's (DOE's) methodology for classification of residual wastes as "incidental" once the defense high-level radioactive waste tanks are emptied. In order to perform this review, we will first need to establish an agreement regarding funding, as this effort is currently unbudgeted. Once we have established a funding agreement, we intend to perform a scoping review of the tank closure technical support documents and provide you with a detailed schedule of our technical review. We are aware that you intend to begin grouting on September 27, 1996, however, it is not feasible to complete the review of DOE's methodology by this date.

Once the funding issue has been resolved, it is our intent to provide an expedited technical review as requested. This review may involve the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analysis, as well as NRC technical staff, because there are no NRC staff full-time equivalents budgeted for this task. If the reviewers consider it necessary, a Request for Additional Information may also be part of this process. Following the technical review, staff will seek the Commission's concurrence on the final decision. The expedited review process is roughly estimated to take 6 to 7 months, including time allocated for Commission review; it will take longer if contractor resources are necessary. Despite the constraints of the review process, we hope to work out a mutually acceptable schedule.

I look forward to meeting with your Assistant Manager, Mr. L. Watkins, on Tuesday, September 17, 1996, to discuss this matter. If you have any questions regarding the details of this letter, please contact Michael Bell of my staff on (301) 415-7286.

Sincerely,

[Original Signed by J. T. Greeves for]  
 Carl J. Paperiello, Director  
 Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
 and Safeguards

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 NHP

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Once the funding issue has been resolved, it is our intent to provide an expedited technical review as requested. This review may involve the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analysis, as well as NRC technical staff, because there are no NRC staff full-time equivalents budgeted for this task. If the reviewers consider it necessary, a Request for Additional Information may also be part of this process. Following the technical review, staff will seek the Commission's concurrence on the final decision. The expedited review process is roughly estimated to take 6 to 7 months, including time allocated for Commission review; it will take longer if contractor resources are necessary. Despite the constraints of the review process, we hope to work out a mutually acceptable schedule.

I look forward to meeting with your Assistant Manager, Mr. L. Watkins, on Tuesday, September 17, 1996, to discuss this matter. If you have any questions regarding the details of this letter, please contact Michael Bell of my staff on (301) 415-7286.

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Once the funding issue has been resolved, it is our intent to provide an expedited technical review as requested. This review may involve the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analysis, as well as NRC technical staff, because there are no NRC staff full-time equivalents budgeted for this task. If the reviewers consider it necessary, a Request for Additional Information may also be part of this process. Following the technical review, the staff will make a recommendation to the Commission, which will need to approve the final decision. The expedited review process is roughly estimated to take 6 to 7 months, including time allocated for Commission review; it will take longer if contractor resources are necessary.

Despite the constraints of the review process, we hope to work out a mutually acceptable schedule. Following resolution of the funding issues and once the scoping review has been performed, we expect to provide you with a detailed schedule. If you have any questions regarding the details of this letter, please contact Michael Bell of my staff on (301) 415-7286.

Sincerely,

Carl J. Paperiello, Director  
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