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Mr. Sam Rousso, Acting Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U. S. Department of Energy RW-24
Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Mr. Rousso:

As noted in the September 16, 1988 letter from Chairman Zech to Secretary Herrington, transmitting the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) comments on the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Draft 1988 Mission Plan Amendment, the NRC staff provides quarterly status reports to the Commission on the pre-licensing phase of the DOE's Civilian High-Level Radioactive Waste Management Program. These reports address, among other things, progress on key action items identified in DOE's June 1987 Mission Plan Amendment which are critical to the development of a complete and high quality license application and thus, ensure a prompt NRC decision on the application. By focusing on the items addressed in these reports, we can ensure our staffs are working together to improve the effectiveness of our pre-licensing consultation efforts.

One of the more important items in the most recent quarterly report (enclosed) that I would like to work with you on in the immediate future is the need to set up more focused technical interactions between our staffs. I believe these meetings provide the most effective way for understanding and addressing NRC concerns prior to major DOE decisions and preparation of key documents, such as the Site Characterization Plan.

In addition to our working together on the concerns raised in these quarterly reports, you may wish to address any of the NRC staff issues raised in the most recent quarterly report in your forthcoming briefing to the Commission. If you have any questions concerning this request or the report, please call me or Robert Browning, Director, Division of High-Level Waste Management.

Sincerely,
(Signed) Hugh L. Thompson, Jr.

Hugh L. Thompson, Jr., Director
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

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