

May 14, 2004

Mr. Donald W. Parker, Manager  
Environmental, Health, Safety, and Licensing  
Framatome ANP, Inc.  
2102 Horn Rapids Road  
Richland, WA 99352

Dear Mr. Parker:

We received your letter of September 29, 2003, as your response to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Bulletin 2003-003 (BL-2003-003), "Potentially Defective 1-Inch Valves for Uranium Hexafluoride Cylinders," dated August 29, 2003, NRC has reviewed your response and approves your proposal for alternative action relative to the handling of uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>) cylinders with valves manufactured by the Hunt Valve Company. We also find it necessary to inform you of NRC's approval of a proposal by the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) that may affect shipments to you of UF<sub>6</sub>-filled cylinders. These shipments arise from USEC's role in utilizing the downblended UF<sub>6</sub> produced from highly enriched Russian uranium in the Megatons to Megawatts program.

NRC recognizes the limitations Framatome ANP (FANP) has described in its cylinder wash capacity, preventing the complete removal of Hunt valves from all of FANP's UF<sub>6</sub> cylinders before the end of the 12-month transition period described in the bulletin. NRC understands that under FANP's alternative proposal, there will be no FANP-owned UF<sub>6</sub>-filled cylinders with Hunt valves remaining onsite after the end of the 12-month transition period, but that empty cylinders with Hunt valves will be permitted to be stored onsite containing only heels for a period as long as 36 months from the date of the bulletin. NRC also understands that during the extended 36-month period, these cylinders with heels will be washed and have their valves replaced with alternative valves that meet the requirements of ANSI Standard N14.1, consistent with FANP's limited cylinder wash capacity.

Practical considerations also contributed to NRC's approval of USEC's proposal for extending the time period during which UF<sub>6</sub> cylinders with Hunt valves would remain in service. NRC approved USEC's continuing to include in its shipments of enriched UF<sub>6</sub> to its customers cylinders with Hunt valves installed, for a period of up to 36 months from the date of the bulletin. To the extent that FANP continues to receive shipments of enriched UF<sub>6</sub> from USEC, some of the shipments FANP receives may include cylinders with Hunt valves installed. This is because there is a long cycle time connected with empty cylinders that have already been shipped to Russia, the filling of those cylinders with downblended Russian UF<sub>6</sub>, return of the filled cylinders to USEC, temporary storage of the cylinders at USEC, and matching cylinders filled with Russian downblended UF<sub>6</sub> for inclusion in orders from USEC customers. Although USEC has been requested to cease including cylinders with Hunt valves installed among the cylinders that are being sent to Russia, there will necessarily be a long lag time before all Hunt valves are removed from the Megatons to Megawatts program.

Accordingly, NRC approves FANP processing of UF<sub>6</sub> cylinders with Hunt valves installed to the extent that such cylinders may be included in USEC shipments under the Megatons to Megawatts program. NRC understands that this will involve a prolongation of the risk posed by

D.W. Parker

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continued use of cylinders with Hunt valves installed, but that FANP will be able to minimize this risk through careful implementation of the safety procedures described in its response to Requested Action **D** of BL-2003-003.

If you have any further questions, please contact Lance Lessler, of my staff, at (301) 415-8144.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

Robert C. Pierson, Director  
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety  
and Safeguards  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

Docket No. 70-7003

cc: Rick Boyle, DOT  
S. A. Toelle, USEC

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\*See previous concurrence

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