

50-390



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

September 11, 1995

The Honorable Bart Gordon
United States House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4206

Dear Congressman Gordon:

I am responding to your letter of August 15, 1995 to Mr. Dennis Rathbun, in which you forwarded a letter from your constituent, Mr. John Wayne Allen, regarding the Watts Bar Nuclear Plant.

In his letter, Mr. Allen expressed several concerns about the Watts Bar plant. The Watts Bar plant has been under construction since 1972. TVA is currently nearing completion of construction, and the NRC will soon make a decision about whether the plant should be licensed to operate. TVA will not be granted an operating license until the NRC has reasonable assurance that all applicable regulatory requirements have been met, and TVA has demonstrated the ability to operate the plant in a safe and environmentally acceptable manner.

The NRC staff has already completed extensive evaluations of the environmental and safety aspects of operating Watts Bar Unit 1. The staff's environmental evaluation may be found in the "Final Environmental Statement Related to the Operation of Watts Bar Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2" (NUREG-0498) and Supplement No. 1. The staff's safety evaluation may be found in "Safety Evaluation Report Related to the Operation of Watts Bar Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2" (NUREG-0847) and Supplements 1 through 15. Copies of these documents have been placed in the Local Public Document Room, Chattanooga-Hamilton Library, 1001 Broad Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402. Copies also may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Post Office Box 37082, Washington, D.C. 20013-7082.

The NRC had a meeting near the Watts Bar plant on September 5, 1995 to receive public comments and concerns about the licensing of Watts Bar. Several announcements of the meeting were published in the local newspapers. Concerns expressed during the meeting will be addressed as part of the licensing process for Watts Bar.

In his letter, Mr. Allen comments that Watts Bar had the highest probability of a core meltdown in the country. In a 1992 submittal regarding a probabilistic risk assessment of Watts Bar Unit 1, TVA did calculate a high core melt frequency of 3.3E-4 per year. However, by letter dated May 2, 1994, TVA provided a revised estimate of 8.0E-5 per year, based on improved emergency procedures. This estimate is consistent with other plants of similar design.

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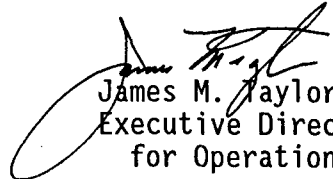
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The Honorable Bart Gordon

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I trust you will find this information helpful in responding to your constituent. If you have any questions, please contact the project manager for Watts Bar, Mr. Peter Tam (301/415-1451).

Sincerely,


James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

The Honorable Bart Gordon

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I trust you will find this information helpful in responding to your constituent. If you have any questions, please contact the project manager for Watts Bar, Mr. Peter Tam (301/415-1451).

Sincerely,

Original signed by
James M. Taylor

James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

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