

Ms. Amy Marie Harmon  
3461 Douglass  
Memphis, Tennessee 38111

February 15, 1996

Dear Ms. Harmon:

I am responding to your letter of January 7, 1996, addressed to Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) concerning the Tennessee Valley Authority's Watts Bar nuclear power plant near Spring City, Tennessee. You also urged the Commission to discourage the use of nuclear power.

The NRC has conducted extensive inspections and reviews of Watts Bar, and concluded that construction of Watts Bar Unit 1 has been completed in accordance with applicable NRC rules and regulations. There is reasonable assurance that the plant activities can be conducted without endangering the health and safety of the public, and that such activities will be conducted in compliance with the Commission's regulations. In addition, the staff concluded that the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has the requisite staff, programs, and procedures in place to operate Unit 1 in accordance with the applicable rules and regulations. On November 9, 1995, the NRC issued a low-power operating license to allow TVA to load fuel and operate Watts Bar Unit 1 up to a maximum power level of 5%. On January 31, 1996, the NRC staff recommended that the NRC Commission authorize issuance of a full-power license for Watts Bar Unit 1. On February 6, 1996, the Commission authorized me as the Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) to issue the full-power operating license. I issued the full-power operating license on February 7, 1996.

With respect to your suggestion that NRC discourage the use of nuclear power, the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 separated the regulatory activities associated with nuclear power (assigned to the NRC) from the promotional activities (assigned to what is now the Department of Energy). Therefore, it is not within the NRC's jurisdiction to undertake the activities that you recommended. Moreover, the Department of Energy is also responsible for programs to encourage the use of renewable energy resources.

If you have any additional questions, please contact Mr. Peter Tam at (301) 415-1451.

Sincerely,

original signed by  
Frank J. Miraglia

William T. Russell, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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