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Oliver D. Kingsley, Jr.  
President, TVA Nuclear and Chief Nuclear Officer

December 15, 1995

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Document Control Desk  
Washington, DC 20555-0001  
Attn: Chairman Shirley Jackson

Dear Chairman Jackson:

In the Matter of ) Docket Nos. 50-390  
Tennessee Valley Authority ) 50-296

CURRENT STATUS OF WATTS BAR NUCLEAR PLANT (WBN) UNIT 1 AND BROWNS  
FERRY NUCLEAR PLANT (BFN) UNIT 3

In anticipation of our January 5, 1996, meeting with the Commission, I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with a status update on WBN Unit 1 and BFN Unit 3.

When we met to discuss WBN Unit 1 on September 11, 1995, we provided a detailed discussion of our completion activities and our readiness to begin operation. In particular, we covered WBN Unit 1 design and construction close-out activities, the transition to operations, and the operational readiness of our staff. We also met on November 9, 1995, primarily to discuss our readiness to restart BFN Unit 3, but also to discuss our readiness to load fuel and begin WBN Unit 1 low power operations and testing. Later that same day, the NRC issued License No. NPP-20 authorizing fuel loading and low power operation. TVA's progress since that time has been steady.

Fuel loading began on WBN Unit 1 on November 10, 1995, and was completed on November 13, 1995. Reassembly of the reactor pressure vessel and tensioning of the vessel head was completed on November 17, 1995. Heatup of the reactor coolant system to >200°F was accomplished on December 15, 1995. This progress has been achieved while maintaining our backlog of work items within established targets. We will continue to focus on this area as we proceed through Power Ascension Testing and full power operation.

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The WBN Power Ascension Test Program is being conducted in a cautious, deliberate manner. The first major phase of this program, fuel load and precriticality testing, is well under way. To date, we have completed Initial Core Loading Sequence testing, Physical Verification of Core Load Prior to Vessel Closure, Reactor Trip System testing, and Engineered Safety Feature Actuation System testing. We are currently testing the Spent Fuel Pool Cooling System, and that testing will be completed prior to initial criticality. We anticipate achieving criticality and entering low power (<5 percent) physics testing in early January 1996. We will be prepared at that time, upon receipt of a full power operating license, to begin ascension from 5 percent to 30 percent power. Over the next several weeks, we will ascend to 50 percent, 75 percent, and 100 percent power plateaus.

Our plant staff continues to demonstrate their ability to accept and properly execute the duties and responsibilities required to safely and efficiently operate the plant. One of the important aspects of our operational readiness program is to continue the line organizations' self-assessment of their own activities. Under this process, line organizations document strengths and weaknesses identified by field observations, and these findings are provided for senior management review and corrective actions. We found this process to be very helpful during our hot functional testing activities earlier this year.

Our quality assurance department's assessments and audits have also found that site personnel, procedures, and programs are adequate. They have reviewed, for example, security, drawing control, fuel loading, maintenance activities, configuration control, and especially the power ascension testing program with only minor problems being identified. These reviews resulted in some improvements in plant status control and the identification/resolution of other minor issues.

We are continuing to successfully transition to an operating organizational structure and staffing level. A significant reduction of construction activities has resulted in a corresponding reduction in the size of the work force. The exiting process for workers leaving the site includes an interview with a representative of our Concerns Resolution Program. This interview provides each employee with an opportunity to raise any concerns that they believe have not been addressed by site management. These interviews have resulted in very few issues being identified,

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none of which was determined to be safety significant. This provides further confirmation that our line management is continuing to resolve issues through effective communications with plant employees. Throughout our transition from a construction work force to an operating staff, we continue to see improving employee morale. With our continued efforts to encourage communication, we anticipate continued improvement in the weeks and months ahead.

The NRC Region II Administrator approved BFN Unit 3 restart on November 19, 1995, and the unit achieved criticality later that day. On December 14, 1995, we successfully completed the Power Ascension Test Program and began the 100-hour confidence run. Both site and corporate management are aware of the challenge of multi-unit operation. They and I are convinced that the BFN site personnel are fully capable of, and committed to, continued operational success.

We will continue to keep the NRC staff advised on the key activities and schedules for WBN Unit 1 and BFN Unit 3. If you have any questions on the status of these units, please call me at (423) 751-4770.

Sincerely,



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