



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001

March 23, 2009

Chris Behler
601 Hickory Road
Woodstock, IL 60098

Dear Chris:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

The Department of Energy submitted an application June 3, 2008, for a license to build and operate Yucca Mountain. The NRC is currently reviewing that application and expects to continue that review for several more years. If the NRC issues a license, the DOE would spend several years building the facility, although the White House's latest budget request to Congress excludes any funding for pre-construction activities. I've included a fact sheet on the Yucca Mountain licensing process.

It would be more appropriate for the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy (www.nuclear.gov) to discuss the relative costs and benefits of various forms of energy.

Thank you.

/RA/

Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs

Encl: Fact Sheet



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001**

March 23, 2009

Mr. James Furlano
411 Barbary Lane
Woodstock, IL 60098

Dear James:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

The NRC oversees an industry that has operated dozens of reactors in the United States for several decades, and no member of the public has been harmed by radiation or radioactive material from these plants. Even the Three Mile Island accident failed to produce any measurable effect on the health of the surrounding community or environment. Both the NRC and U.S. plants learned many valuable lessons from that accident, as well as from the experience gained during hundreds of years' worth of normal operations. Current U.S. plants have steadily improved their performance over the past decade. The NRC's ongoing oversight and inspections, including at least two NRC employees at every nuclear power plant, aim at one goal: ensuring the plants operate safely. When our oversight indicates performance issues at a plant, the NRC increases the level of inspection to ensure the plant operator takes the steps necessary to correct the situation, and the agency will shut a plant down if it exhibits unacceptable performance.

Regarding nuclear waste, please keep in mind U.S. nuclear power plants must obey strict NRC requirements on properly storing the waste and eventually disposing of it. The used, or "spent" fuel from the reactor must be kept in a deep concrete-and-steel pool for several years. After that point it can be safely and appropriately stored in large concrete-and-steel "dry casks" for decades. Low-level waste is also subject to strict onsite storage requirements before it can be shipped to an NRC-licensed facility for ultimate disposal. All of this waste storage and transport is monitored by regular NRC inspections.

Chernobyl was certainly a major nuclear accident. A 2005 international study by groups such as the World Health Organization determined the accident led to 56 deaths (47 accident workers, and nine children with thyroid cancer), and projected an additional 4,000 possible cancer deaths in the 600,000 people who received the highest radiation doses. The NRC will never allow construction or operation of anything remotely resembling the Chernobyl reactor in this country. The multiple, redundant safety features, physical barriers, operator training and emergency preparedness plans at U.S. plants would prevent a Chernobyl-style event. The NRC has been performing state-of-the-art research into the potential consequences of an accident at current U.S. plants, and we hope to publish the results soon – please watch for the announcement so that you'll be aware of the latest, most realistic information on this topic. Plant designs being considered for future U.S. nuclear power plants are expected to be many times better at preventing accidents or minimizing their effects.

I've included several fact sheets regarding some of the topics you've mentioned. It would be more appropriate for the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy (www.nuclear.gov) to discuss the relative costs and benefits of various forms of energy.

Thank you.

/RA/

Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs

Encl: Fact Sheets



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001

March 23, 2009

Ms. Emily McEntee
5308 Cobblers Crossing
McHenry, IL 60050

Dear Emily:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

Given that the NRC provides access to nearly all information regarding U.S. nuclear power plants on the agency Web site (www.nrc.gov), it's quite surprising that you're aware of the agency and yet came to the conclusions you did. Dozens of reactors have operated in the United States for several decades, and no member of the public has been harmed by radiation or radioactive material from these plants. Even the Three Mile Island accident failed to produce any measurable effect on the health of the surrounding community or environment. Both the NRC and U.S. plants learned many valuable lessons from that accident, as well as from the experience gained during hundreds of years' worth of normal operations. Current U.S. plants have steadily improved their performance over the past decade, and the NRC's ongoing inspections and oversight aim at one goal: ensuring the plants operate safely. When our oversight indicates performance issues at a plant, the NRC increases the level of inspection to ensure the plant operator takes the steps necessary to correct the situation, and the agency will shut a plant down if it exhibits unacceptable performance.

Chernobyl is not an option, but that is because the NRC will never allow construction or operation of such a reactor in this country. The multiple, redundant safety features, physical barriers, operator training and emergency preparedness plans at U.S. plants would prevent a Chernobyl-style event. The NRC has been performing state-of-the-art research into the potential consequences of an accident at current U.S. plants, and we hope to publish the results soon – please watch for the announcement so that you'll be aware of the latest, most realistic information on this topic. Plant designs being considered for future U.S. nuclear power plants are expected to be many times better at preventing accidents or minimizing their effects.

I've included several fact sheets regarding some of the topics you've mentioned. It would be more appropriate for the Department of Energy (www.energy.gov) to discuss the nation's approach to encouraging conservation, and the DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy (www.nuclear.gov) is best equipped to discuss the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and its incentives for new U.S. nuclear power plants.

Thank you,
/RA/
Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs

Encl: Fact Sheets



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001

March 23, 2009

Mr. Bobby Schultz
4210 S. Ridgeway
Ringwood, IL 60072

Dear Bobby:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

The NRC provides information on many of the topics you mention on the agency Web site, www.nrc.gov. I'm uncertain where you determined "repairs and clean-up have to be done every 30 years," since U.S. nuclear power plants are licensed for 40 years and can renew their licenses for an additional 20 years if the NRC determines it would be safe to do so. In any case, plants must have regular maintenance procedures in place to ensure safety systems remain operational.

Regarding nuclear waste, please keep in mind U.S. nuclear power plants must obey strict NRC requirements on properly storing the waste and eventually disposing of it. The used, or "spent" fuel from the reactor must be kept in a deep concrete-and-steel pool for several years. After that point it can be safely and appropriately stored in large concrete-and-steel "dry casks" for decades. Low-level waste is also subject to strict onsite storage requirements before it can be shipped to an NRC-licensed facility for ultimate disposal. All of this waste storage is monitored by regular NRC inspections.

Chernobyl was a very serious accident, but the NRC will never allow construction or operation of such a reactor in this country. The multiple, redundant safety features, physical barriers, operator training and emergency preparedness plans at U.S. plants would prevent a Chernobyl-style event. The NRC has been performing state-of-the-art research into the potential consequences of an accident at current U.S. plants, and we hope to publish the results soon – please watch for the announcement so that you'll be aware of the latest, most realistic information on this topic. Plant designs being considered for future U.S. nuclear power plants are expected to be many times better at preventing accidents or minimizing their effects.

The NRC strengthened the already-stringent security rules at U.S. nuclear power plants following the events of Sept. 11, 2001. The plants have stronger barriers, better-trained guards and many other security features designed to ensure even a significant attack would fail to harm the plant or remove any radioactive material.

I've included several fact sheets regarding some of the topics you've mentioned. It would be more appropriate for the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy (www.nuclear.gov) to discuss climate change considerations and the relative costs of various forms of energy.

Thank you.

/RA/

Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs

Encl: Fact Sheets



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001**

March 23, 2009

Ms. Stefanie Tabat
45 Lincoln Pkwy
Crystal Lake, IL 60014

Dear Stefanie:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

Thank you.

/RA/

Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001**

March 23, 2009

Mr. Patrick Wenzel
c/o Marian Central Catholic H.S.
1001 McHenry Ave.
Woodstock, IL 60098

Dear Patrick:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

The NRC oversees an industry that has operated dozens of reactors in the United States for several decades, and no member of the public has been harmed by radiation or radioactive material from these plants. Even the Three Mile Island accident failed to produce any measurable effect on the health of the surrounding community or environment. Both the NRC and U.S. plants learned many valuable lessons from that accident, as well as from the experience gained during hundreds of years' worth of normal operations. Current U.S. plants have steadily improved their performance over the past decade. The NRC's ongoing oversight and inspections, including at least two NRC employees at every nuclear power plant, aim at one goal: ensuring the plants operate safely. When our oversight indicates performance issues at a plant, the NRC increases the level of inspection to ensure the plant operator takes the steps necessary to correct the situation, and the agency will shut a plant down if it exhibits unacceptable performance.

Regarding nuclear waste, please keep in mind all 104 U.S. nuclear power plants must obey strict NRC requirements on properly storing the waste and eventually disposing of it. The used, or "spent" fuel from the reactor must be kept in a deep, water-filled concrete-and-steel pool for several years. After that point it can be safely and appropriately stored in large concrete-and-steel "dry casks" for decades. Low-level waste is also subject to strict onsite storage requirements before it can be shipped to an NRC-licensed facility for ultimate disposal. All of this waste storage is monitored by regular NRC inspections.

The NRC strengthened the already-stringent security rules at U.S. nuclear power plants following the events of Sept. 11, 2001. The plants have stronger barriers, better-trained guards that must undergo rigorous evaluations, and many other security features designed to ensure even a significant attack would fail to harm the plant or remove any radioactive material. The NRC performed detailed analysis of the plants following Sept. 11, and concludes that even the impact of a large commercial aircraft is very unlikely to lead to radioactive material reaching the environment.

The consequence numbers you quote are based on misinterpretations of outdated, simplistic analyses that were not meant to determine the results of a potential accident. The NRC has been performing state-of-the-art research into the potential consequences of an accident at current U.S. plants, and we hope to publish the results soon – please watch for the announcement so that you'll be aware of the latest, most realistic information on this topic. Plant designs being considered for future U.S. nuclear power plants are expected to be many times better at preventing accidents or minimizing their effects.

I've included several fact sheets regarding some of the topics you've mentioned. It would be more appropriate for the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy (www.nuclear.gov) to discuss the relative costs of various forms of energy, as well as the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and its related incentives for new nuclear plants.

Thank you.

/RA/

Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs

Encl: Fact Sheets



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-001

March 23, 2009

Ms. Maggie Manning
15010 Church Road
Huntley, IL 60142

Dear Maggie:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Klein regarding nuclear power plants. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has one job – ensuring the public and the environment are protected when radioactive materials are used for civilian purposes. When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, it decided building and operating nuclear power plants is an appropriate civilian use. The NRC therefore neither supports nor opposes nuclear power, we only ensure it is safe if a company decides to use it.

The NRC (www.nrc.gov) has set out strict requirements for U.S. nuclear power plants to follow regarding the proper storage of nuclear waste and its eventual disposal. The used, or “spent” fuel from the reactor must be kept in a deep, water-filled concrete-and-steel pool for several years. After that point it can be safely and appropriately stored in large concrete-and-steel “dry casks” for decades. Low-level waste is also subject to strict onsite storage requirements before it can be shipped to an NRC-licensed facility for ultimate disposal. All of this waste storage and transport is monitored by regular NRC inspections.

Chernobyl was certainly the most serious nuclear accident to date, but the NRC will never allow construction or operation of such a reactor in this country. The multiple, redundant safety features, physical barriers, operator training and emergency preparedness plans at U.S. plants would prevent a Chernobyl-style event. The NRC has been performing state-of-the-art research into the potential consequences of an accident at current U.S. plants, and we hope to publish the results soon – please watch for the announcement so that you’ll be aware of the latest, most realistic information on this topic. Plant designs being considered for future U.S. nuclear power plants are expected to be many times better at preventing accidents or minimizing their effects.

I’ve included several fact sheets regarding some of the topics you’ve mentioned. It would be more appropriate for the Department of Energy’s Office of Nuclear Energy (www.nuclear.gov) to discuss the relative costs and benefits of various forms of energy.

Thank you.

/RA/

Scott Burnell
Office of Public Affairs

Encl: Fact Sheets