## Ridge, Christianne

**From:** Timothy Johnson /NMSS
**Sent:** Monday, July 14, 2008 4:15 PM
**To:** Brian Smith; Michael Tschiltz; Robert Pierson; David McIntyre; Kenneth Clark; Roger Hannah; Christianne Ridge; Gregory Suber; Gloria Kulesa
**Subject:** Reporter

Note that I just talked to Wayne Faulkner of the Wilmington News-Star. He asked about the GE meeting on Thurs.

He asked if there was only 1 enrichment plant operating in the US. I said yes. He also asked when the LES plant would begin operations and what technology it uses. I said the plant is scheduled to begin operations at the end of 2009 and it will use gas centrifuge technology.

He asked me to compare the safety of the GE facility to a nuclear power plant. I said that a uranium enrichment plant has a substantially lower hazard. I stated that the principal hazard is chemical, similar to other industrial facilities that handle corrosive substances. I said that the GE fuel fabrication plant has similar hazards as the proposed enrichment plant.

He asked about schedules and if I thought the GE's schedule to begin operations in 2012 was reasonable. I told him I thought it would be realistic although I could only really address the licensing part of it. I told him that we scheduled the licensing to take 30 months, with a year included to address any hearing issues. I discussed the fact that the hearing is a formal judicial process and not just a meeting where people can make statements. He asked if the hearings would be in Washington. I said that that will depend on the issues. I said if the issues are unclassified and environmental, the hearings would probably be in Wilmington. However, if classified information is involved, the hearings would probably be in Washington.

He asked about what Silex had done. I said that Silex had worked out the physics of the process, but GE needed to demonstate that the physics could be developed into a viable commercial plant. This is the purpose of the test loop. I told him the NRC was generally familiar with the physics and our review would address the health and safety and environmental aspects of the facility, not its commercial viability. I said that NRC is not a promoter of nuclear energy and we would not issue a license unless we are satisfied that the plant can meet our health and safety standards.

E-4

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