

January 29, 2014

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of December 5, 2013, forwarding correspondence from your constituent, Elliott Stoan. Mr. Stoan expressed support for the reprocessing of spent fuel rods from commercial nuclear power reactors. Reprocessing refers generally to the processes necessary to separate spent nuclear reactor fuel into material that may be recycled for use in new fuel and material that would be discarded as waste. There are no commercial reprocessing facilities currently operating in the United States.

Establishing national nuclear waste management policy, which could include reprocessing, is the responsibility of Congress. The lead for implementation of that policy is the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Currently, DOE is continuing with its long-term research and development program that includes reprocessing technologies, with a goal of achieving a safe, proliferation-resistant, closed fuel cycle using fast-spectrum reactors.

The NRC's role is to license and regulate reprocessing facilities. No application for a commercial reprocessing facility is expected anytime soon. However, the NRC is aware that various industry vendors have been recently developing reprocessing strategies as part of an integrated fuel management strategy that includes research, development, and demonstration of advanced fuel utilization and recycling technologies. Therefore, in preparation for a potential future application, the agency conducted an analysis of its existing regulations for reprocessing and identified gaps that need resolution to effectively and efficiently license and regulate such facilities. The agency is working toward resolving these gaps.

I hope this information is useful to Mr. Stoan. If you need additional information, please contact me or the Office of Congressional Affairs at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Mark A. Satorius  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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Mark A. Satorius  
Executive Director  
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