

June 4, 2009

Dr. Mario V. Bonaca, Chairman
Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

SUBJECT: MARCH 18, 2009, ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON REACTOR SAFEGUARDS
LETTER ON USING CONTAINMENT ACCIDENT PRESSURE

Dear Dr. Bonaca:

For some time, the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) and the staff of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have discussed the use of containment accident pressure to demonstrate that emergency core cooling system and containment heat removal pumps will perform their safety functions in design basis accidents (e.g., a large break loss-of-coolant), and special events (e.g., station blackout). The staff appreciates the insights provided by the ACRS and the substantial amount of time the ACRS has devoted to this important issue.

The staff is carefully reviewing the recommendations of the March 18th ACRS letter. In response to the ACRS letter, representatives from the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) and ACRS met with the Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and Preparedness Programs on May 6th. Many options were discussed to resolve the differences between the NRC staff and the ACRS recommendations on this issue. As discussed during the meeting, the staff is evaluating some of your recommendations which entail generic implementation, for example, revising Regulatory Guide 1.82, "Water Sources for Long-term Recirculation Cooling Following a Loss-of-Coolant Accident," but this evaluation will take some time. Therefore, in the near term, the staff is evaluating and factoring your questions and suggestions into its ongoing review of the Tennessee Valley Authority license amendment request to increase the rated thermal power of the Browns Ferry Plant, Units 1, 2, and 3. In particular, since the last ACRS briefing concerning Browns Ferry in July 2008, the licensee has provided more in-depth information that bears on the issues raised in the ACRS letter. The staff is reviewing the usefulness of this information to address the ACRS recommendations and will continue to keep the ACRS informed of the progress on the Browns Ferry review. As discussed, the staff then plans to brief the ACRS on how the issues raised in the ACRS letter will be resolved in regard to the Browns Ferry amendment request, if the application is acceptable to the staff.

M. Bonaca

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While the staff carefully weighs the ACRS recommendations, we may consider delaying issuance of licensing actions currently under review related to changes in the use of containment accident pressure. The staff will continue to review license amendment requests which do not include the use of containment accident pressure in determining available net positive suction head.

Sincerely,

/RA By Bruce S. Mallett for/

R. W. Borchardt
Executive Director
for Operations

cc: Chairman Jaczko
Commissioner Lyons
Commissioner Klein
Commissioner Svinicki
SECY

M. Bonaca

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