

May 8, 2000

Mr. David Modeen
Director of Engineering
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

SUBJECT: CAUSES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF DESIGN-BASIS ISSUES AT U.S. NUCLEAR
POWER PLANTS

Dear Mr. Modeen:

Enclosed for your review and comment is a draft report, "Causes and Significance of Design-Basis Issues at U.S. Nuclear Power Plants," initiated by the former Office for Analysis and Evaluation of Operational Data and completed by the Regulatory Effectiveness Assessment and Human Factors Branch, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES). The report documents the results of a systematic and comprehensive study of design-basis issue trends and patterns. The study provides insights from reported design-basis issues with respect to: (1) their causes, significant patterns within both the power reactor industry and power reactor systems, frequency trends, safety consequences, and risk significance; (2) lessons that may be useful in assessing regulatory effectiveness of NRC's evolving inspection and plant performance assessment processes and the definition of plant design basis; and (3) regulatory burden implications related to NRC licensee event reporting requirements for design-basis issues. It is intended that the insights from this study assist NRC and industry ongoing efforts to make NRC's regulatory framework and oversight process more risk informed and performance based and to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden.

In accordance with our "peer review" process prior to finalization and distribution of study reports, we wish to provide you with the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report, particularly with regard to its completeness and accuracy. As mentioned in the report, many programmatic changes are ongoing that will affect the current inspection, assessment, and reporting criteria of design-basis issues. This report will be updated with the status of those programmatic changes at the time the final report is issued.

We welcome your comments. To meet our planned issuance schedule, we would appreciate receiving your comments within 60 days from receipt of this letter.

As you may know, RES reports do not represent official U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission positions. Our reports are one input to an ongoing review and evaluation process.

D. Modeen

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A copy of this draft report and letter are being placed in the Public Document Room at 2120 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20555.

If you have questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact Mr. Stuart D. Rubin, E-mail: SDR1@NRC.GOV, (301) 415-7480, or Mr. Ronald L. Lloyd, E-mail: RLL1@NRC.GOV, (301) 415-7479 of my staff.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Charles E. Rossi, Director
Division of Systems Analysis and Regulatory Effectiveness
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

Enclosures: As stated

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If you have questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact Mr. Stuart D. Rubin, E-mail: SDR1@NRC.GOV, (301) 415-7480, or Mr. Ronald L. Lloyd, E-mail: RLL1@NRC.GOV, (301) 415-7479 of my staff.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Charles E. Rossi, Director
Division of Systems Analysis and Regulatory Effectiveness
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

Enclosures: As stated

Identical letters sent to: See attached list

Distribution: See attached list

ADAMS Package: ML003711895
External Memo: ML003712246
Report: ML003711881
Appendix A: ML003711934
Appendices B–E ML003711942

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Letter dated May 8, 2000

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POWER PLANTS

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