

March 21, 2001

Mr. John H. Ferguson
Vice President, Nuclear Codes and Standards
American Society of Mechanical Engineers
Three Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016-5990

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

In a letter dated January 12, 2001, you expressed the concerns of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) regarding the delay in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) endorsement of ASME Code Cases and the NRC's planned changes in the endorsement process. The NRC has relied on the ASME Code since 1971 as one part of the framework to establish the necessary design, fabrication, construction, inspection, and testing requirements for structures, systems, and components important to safety at nuclear power plants. Prompt NRC endorsement of ASME Code Cases allows timely implementation of technological advances and reduces the number of relief requests that must be prepared by licensees and reviewed by the NRC staff, thus, reducing unnecessary burden on licensees and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory process.

On February 21, 2001, the NRC staff held a public meeting with you and other ASME representatives to discuss and obtain your input on the NRC processes for endorsing the ASME Code and Code Cases, as well as on potential improvements to those processes. We believe the meeting was successful in providing a common understanding of the NRC's processes for endorsing the ASME Code and Code Cases through applicable regulations and regulatory guides. As discussed during the meeting, the NRC staff is working to ensure that the NRC endorsement of ASME Code Cases complies with requirements for incorporating the regulatory guides that address the ASME Code Cases by reference into the regulations. The staff has met with the Office of the Federal Register to obtain its preliminary approval for the incorporation by reference of these NRC-prepared documents into the regulations. We view this process as the most efficient option for endorsing ASME Code Cases.

The staff is developing a process to minimize the time necessary to update the regulatory guides addressing ASME Code Cases, and to revise the NRC regulation to incorporate by reference the latest revision of those regulatory guides. We will keep you informed regarding our progress in developing that process and the anticipated schedules for updating the regulatory guides and revising the regulations. The most recent regulatory guides, issued in May 1999, address ASME Code Cases published through September 1995. The staff has completed its review of ASME Code Cases published through June 1999 and will complete its review, by spring 2001, of the Code Cases published through January 2001. The staff is working to issue for public comment a proposed revision to the regulatory guides by late summer 2001.

At the February 21, 2001, meeting, the ASME representatives and NRC staff agreed to several action items for improving the NRC endorsement processes for the ASME Code and Code Cases. I have directed the staff to work with you to assure these actions are completed and to

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assure a continuing dialogue on our interactions with ASME. I believe these actions should significantly improve communications between NRC and ASME and expedite the Code endorsement process.

The NRC values the ASME's contribution to the design, fabrication, construction, inspection, and testing of nuclear power plant structures, systems, and components. We appreciate the opportunity to work with the ASME to improve the NRC endorsement processes for the ASME Code and Code Cases.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP

DATE: January 27, 2003

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DATE: January 27, 2003

TO:	INITIALS	DATE
1. W. Norris - initial/concurrence		
2. A. Beranek - initial		
3. F. Cherny - initial		
4. N. Chokshi - initial/concurrence		
5. S. Collins, NRR - initial/concurrence		
6. M. Mayfield -initial/concurrence		
7. M. Federline -initial		
8. A. Thadani - initial/concurrence		
9. C. Paperiello - initial		
10. W. Travers - initial/signature/concurrence		
11. R. Lambert/dispatch		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		

	Action		File		Note and Return
	Approval		For Clearance		Per Conversation
	As Requested		For Correction		Prepare Reply
	Circulate		For Your Info		See Me
X	Comment		Investigate	X	Signature
	Coordination		Justify	X	Concurrence

GT20010021 DUE TO RES ON 3/13, AND EDO 3/15 (DUAL PACKAGES IN CONCURRENCE)

LETTER TO: J. Ferguson, ASME
 FROM: William D. Travers, EDO
 SUBJECT: ASME LETTER DATED JANUARY 12, 2001, REGARDING NRC
 ENDORSEMENT OF CODE CASES

FROM: R. Lambert	Room No. T-10-E-6 Phone No. x5686
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