

January 19, 2001

Mr. John Ferguson
Chairman, Board of Nuclear Codes and Standards
American Society of Mechanical Engineers
NE Utilities
P.O. Box 128
Waterford, CT 06385-0128

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

In January 1998, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) undertook the task of writing a Probabilistic Risk Assessment (PRA) consensus standard. Since that time, two revisions (i.e., Revision 10 and Revision 12) have been issued for public review and comment, in February 1999 and June 2000, respectively.

As you know, a new version of the standard ("Revision 13") is under development. During the development of the standard, individual Commissioners frequently emphasized the importance of the ASME standard for ensuring PRA quality consistent with the use of the PRA in the regulatory process. The Commission has also emphasized the importance of stakeholder involvement in the development of the standard. The Commission in a recent staff requirements memorandum (dated November 9, 2000) directed that "The staff should continue to work with stakeholders to resolve differences associated with the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) standard on PRA and *should encourage the ASME to seek public comment on Revision 13 of the standard [emphasis added].*" We urge the ASME to take this extra step to facilitate additional stakeholder involvement.

The NRC and ASME have a successful history of working together. We will continue, through participation on the project team and consensus committee, to support this effort. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me or Mary Drouin ((301) 415-6675, email mxd@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

cc: SECY
W.Travers
S. Collins
M. Mayfield
G. Holahan
J. Ling, ASME
G. Eisenberg, ASME
S. Bernsen
R. Simard, NEI

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NAME	Drouin	Cunningham	King	Mayfield	Thadani
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