

# RULEMAKING ISSUE NOTATION VOTE

July 23, 2001

SECY-01-0133

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: William D. Travers  
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON STUDY OF RISK-INFORMED CHANGES TO THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF 10 CFR PART 50 (OPTION 3) AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON RISK-INFORMED CHANGES TO 10 CFR 50.46 (ECCS ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA)

PURPOSE:

To provide the fourth status report on the staff's study of possible risk-informed changes to the technical requirements of 10 CFR Part 50, and to specifically provide the staff's recommendations for risk-informed changes to 10 CFR 50.46 ("Acceptance Criteria for Emergency Core Cooling Systems (ECCS) for Light-Water Nuclear Power Reactors").

SUMMARY:

The staff has developed recommendations for Commission consideration on risk-informed changes that can be made to 50.46. The staff recommends: (a) modification of the existing 50.46 to change the ECCS acceptance criteria and the Appendix K ECCS evaluation model; and (b) development of a voluntary risk-informed alternative to 50.46, Appendix K and General Design Criterion (GDC) 35 that will change the ECCS reliability requirements. Additional technical work, described in this paper, will be needed to support implementation of the recommendations.

The staff believes that additional changes to 50.46 may be merited. These changes which relate to the scope of pipe break sizes relevant to 50.46, require further technical evaluation and thus more time. The staff intends to continue its assessment of the feasibility of such changes. This feasibility study could require significant staff and industry resources, but could result in considerable reduction of unnecessary regulatory burden. If found feasible, a separate rulemaking would be required.

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BACKGROUND:

In a June 8, 1999, staff requirements memorandum (SRM) on SECY-98-300, the Commission approved proceeding with a study of risk-informing the technical requirements of 10 CFR Part 50. The staff provided its plan and schedule for this work in SECY-99-264, "Proposed Staff Plan for Risk-Informing Technical Requirements in 10 CFR Part 50," dated November 8, 1999. The plan describes two phases to the staff's work. Phase 1 is an evaluation of the feasibility of risk-informed changes and results in recommendations to the Commission on proposed rulemaking. Phase 2 is an implementation phase, consisting of rulemaking (based on recommended changes resulting from Phase 1 and approved by the Commission), and performing needed technical analyses. The Commission approved proceeding with this plan in a February 3, 2000, SRM. Since that time, the staff has provided:

- First status report, SECY-00-0086 ("Status Report on Risk-Informing the Technical Requirements of 10 CFR Part 50 (Option 3)"), which provided the staff's framework for risk-informing the technical requirements of Part 50. The framework document provides the guidelines that the staff is applying in reviewing, formulating, and recommending risk-informed alternatives to the technical requirements of Part 50.
- Second status report, SECY-00-0198 ("Status Report on Study of Risk-Informed Changes to the Technical Requirements of 10 CFR Part 50 (Option 3) and Recommendations on Risk-Informed Changes to 10 CFR 50.44 (Combustible Gas Control)"), which provided recommendations on a risk-informed alternative to 10 CFR 50.44 ("Standards for Combustible Gas Control System in Light-Water-Cooled Power Reactors") and policy issues. In a January 19, 2001 SRM, the Commission directed the staff to proceed expeditiously with rulemaking regarding a risk-informed alternative to 50.44 and to review the resource estimates associated with the overall Option 3 effort. Staff work has begun with respect to 50.44; this will be the subject of a separate paper. This fourth status paper discusses resources associated with Option 3.
- Third status report, memorandum to the Commission ("Third Status Report on Risk-Informing the Technical Requirements in 10 CFR Part 50 (Option 3)") dated February 5, 2001, in which the staff indicated that preliminary recommendations and a detailed plan and schedule on the feasibility of risk-informed changes to 50.46 would be provided to the Commission in the next status report.

This fourth status paper includes recommendations for rulemaking on 50.46 and a plan and schedule for the technical work needed to support the rulemaking. The staff expects that a proposed rule can be provided to the Commission within 12 months of Commission approval of the staff's recommendations discussed in this paper (i.e., receipt of the SRM in response to this paper).

DISCUSSION:

Since the third status report in February 2001, the staff's Option 3 work has involved:

- completing a feasibility assessment with respect to specific changes to 50.46 and the development of recommendations for rulemaking,
- continuing a feasibility assessment of additional possible changes to 50.46,

- continuing with other Option 3 activities (e.g., assessing the feasibility of expanding the single failure criterion beyond ECCS), and
- meeting with stakeholders to obtain their input on these activities (including updating the staff's framework to reflect comments received in public meetings and from the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS)).

### **Feasibility Assessment of Changing 10 CFR 50.46 and Recommendations for Rulemaking**

The staff's feasibility assessment of possible changes to 50.46 included an evaluation of the current requirements, their basis and evolution; a review of related regulations and implementing documents; a review of risk information relevant to 50.46 and related accidents; development and comparison of potential options for risk-informing current requirements; and development of recommendations for changes. The staff's feasibility assessment is provided in Attachment 1; a summary is provided below.

The technical requirements of 50.46 and the related regulations (i.e., GDC 35, "Emergency Core Cooling" and Appendix K, "ECCS Evaluation Models") call for an ECCS for postulated loss-of-coolant accidents (LOCAs). These requirements are grouped into four technical areas:

- ECCS reliability. The ECCS is designed to codes and standards applicable to safety-related systems, and is designed to be reliable by the application of the single failure criterion and specifications on offsite power availability. More specifically, the system is designed to meet specified functional requirements with an assumed single failure and an assumed loss of offsite power simultaneous with the LOCA.
- ECCS acceptance criteria. Calculated parameters such as peak cladding temperature, total cladding oxidation, and maximum hydrogen generation are used as metrics for comparison to the specified criteria.
- ECCS evaluation model. Appendix K of Part 50 describes the most commonly used method for evaluating ECCS performance.
- ECCS spectrum of break sizes and locations. This spectrum includes breaks in pipes in the reactor coolant pressure boundary up to and including a break equivalent in size to the double-ended rupture of the largest pipe in the reactor coolant system.

The staff believes that changes to the first three technical areas above may be justified and the last is potentially feasible. More specifically, the staff believes that the ECCS reliability resulting from the current technical requirements is not commensurate with the risk significance of the various LOCA sizes and that unnecessary conservatism exist in the requirements.

Observations and conclusions that support this staff position for each technical area include:

- ECCS reliability. Current ECCS reliability requirements may be overly conservative for large-break LOCAs.

- ECCS acceptance criteria. Use of a performance-based requirement rather than the current prescriptive ECCS acceptance criteria would allow use of cladding materials other than zircaloy or ZIRLO without licensees having to submit an exemption request.
- ECCS evaluation model. Current evaluation models of ECCS performance may be overly conservative for all LOCAs.
- ECCS spectrum of break sizes and locations. Given current estimates of the frequency of large-break LOCAs (NUREG/CR-5750 indicate 95<sup>th</sup> percentile values of  $10^{-5}$  per critical year for pressurized water reactors [PWRs] and  $10^{-4}$  per critical year for boiling water reactors), the reliability of the ECCS (and containment functions) is generally sufficient to assure that large-break LOCAs (> 6 inches in diameter) are not significant contributors to risk. However, the current estimates of large-break LOCA frequencies are uncertain and are not low enough to allow elimination of all large-break LOCA sizes from the design bases. In addition, plant equipment that is designed, at least in part, to the requirements of design-basis LOCAs also provides defense against a spectrum of beyond-design-basis accidents.

Based on the above analysis, the staff recommends (A) changes to the technical requirements of the current 50.46 related to acceptance criteria and evaluation model, and (B) development of a voluntary risk-informed alternative to the reliability requirements in 50.46. In developing the proposed rule(s)<sup>1</sup> for these two recommendations, the staff will follow the guidelines in its Option 3 framework. The framework is designed to ensure that changes are risk-informed, and include consideration of defense-in-depth principles.

(A) Changes to the Current 10 CFR 50.46

The staff recommends that rulemaking should be undertaken to change the current 50.46.<sup>2</sup> These changes would include:

1. Replace the current prescriptive ECCS acceptance criteria in 50.46 with a performance-based requirement. This requirement would, one, demonstrate adequate post-quench cladding ductility and adequate core-coolant flow area to ensure that the core remains amenable to cooling, and, two, for the duration of the accident, maintain the calculated core temperature at an acceptably low value and remove decay heat. AND Use of a performance-based requirement rather than the current prescriptive criteria would allow use of cladding materials other than zircaloy or ZIRLO without licensees having to submit an exemption request.
2. Revise the requirements for the ECCS evaluation model to be based on more realistic analyses. In the near term, this revision would involve an update of Appendix K

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<sup>1</sup>It is not yet clear if it would be more effective and efficient to make the recommended changes in one or two rulemakings. This will be clarified as staff performs technical work and prepares to begin rulemaking.

<sup>2</sup>The recommendations provided here are limited to changes in the ECCS requirements. There are additional changes, not yet studied, that could “spin-off” including, for example, changes to requirements for containment design or equipment qualification (EQ). The staff’s recommendations provided in this paper presume that other requirements (beyond those for the ECCS) remain unchanged until proper study has been performed.

requirements based on more current and realistic information. Specifically this update could involve:

- a. replacing the current 1971 American Nuclear Society (ANS) decay heat curve with a model based on the 1994 ANS standard.
- b. replacing the current decay heat multiplier of 1.2 with an NRC-prescribed uncertainty treatment.
- c. deleting the limitation on PWR reflood steam cooling for small reflood rates.
- d. replacing the Baker-Just zirconium steam model with the Cathcart-Pawel zirconium steam oxidation model for heat generation.
- e. deleting the prohibition on return to nucleate boiling during blowdown.

As part of this update, the staff will also consider the recognized nonconservatisms and model limitations to insure that proper safety focus is incorporated in any new rule.

The recommended rulemaking is based on a feasibility study, and additional technical work is required to support the actual rule changes. Attachment 2 provides a detailed discussion of the needed technical work; in summary, the staff will undertake work to:

- support removal of unnecessary conservatisms from Appendix K.
- develop guidelines for demonstrating adequate post-quench ductility as a replacement for the current prescriptive acceptance criteria, including specified peak cladding temperature and total cladding oxidation limits.
- support development of the regulatory guides needed for implementing the modifications to the existing rule.

This technical work is estimated to take approximately 12 months and up to 1.3 FTE and cost about \$350k. The staff will continue to perform the technical work needed to support the rulemaking: However, the staff will begin developing the related proposed rulemaking upon Commission approval (i.e., receipt of the SRM), and expects to provide this proposed rulemaking within 12 months. This activity is estimated to take up to 2.3 FTE. The rulemaking will ensure that the approach taken considers backfit implications.

The staff believes that outcomes of this rulemaking will be that safety will be maintained, NRC activities and decision-making will be more effective, efficient and realistic, and unnecessary regulatory burden will be reduced, and that public confidence will also be maintained if we effectively communicate how safety will be maintained. With respect to the unnecessary burden reduction, industry estimates (letter from R. Bryan, Westinghouse Owner's Group (WOG), to T. King, NRC, dated October 17, 2000) indicate that this rulemaking could result in savings of \$100K/year/unit to \$3100K/year/unit, depending on the specific plant and scope of changes.

In addition, this rulemaking would address a petition for rulemaking (PRM-50-71) submitted by the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) on April 12, 2000. NEI has requested that NRC amend its regulations in 50.44 and 50.46 to allow nuclear power plant licensees to use zirconium-based cladding materials other than zircaloy or ZIRLO, provided the cladding materials meet the requirements for fuel cladding performance and receive approval by the NRC staff. This objective, with respect to 50.46, would be accomplished by the changes to the ECCS acceptance criteria recommended above.

(B) Development of a Risk-Informed Voluntary Alternative to 10 CFR 50.46

The staff recommends that rulemaking should be undertaken to develop a risk-informed alternative to the current 50.46.<sup>3</sup> This alternative would be voluntary on the part of licensees and would include technical requirements to ensure an ECCS reliability that is commensurate with the frequency of challenge to systems. This revision would replace the current approach for obtaining ECCS reliability with more risk-informed and realistic approaches. In place of the simultaneous loss of offsite power requirement and single failure criterion, two options would be offered to accomplish ECCS system reliability (further explanation of these options is provided in Attachment 2):

1. A deterministic system reliability requirement based on risk information (e.g., an ECCS design requirement that only one train of ECCS is required for LOCAs larger than a specified size). OR
2. An ECCS functional reliability requirement that is commensurate with the LOCA frequency (e.g., a requirement that ECCS design must be such that the core damage frequency [CDF] associated with a specified set of LOCAs is less than an NRC-specified CDF threshold, with due consideration of uncertainties).

This recommended rulemaking is also based on a feasibility study, and additional technical work is required to support the actual rule changes. Attachment 2 provides a detailed discussion of the needed technical work. In summary, the staff will undertake work to:

- determine acceptable methods and assumptions for performing LOCA CDF and ECCS reliability analyses for those alternatives requiring such analyses, including evaluation of uncertainties. In addition, appropriate reliability and CDF threshold values would have to be selected.
- further examine the likelihood of loss of offsite power following a LOCA, and to determine acceptable methods and assumptions for estimating plant-specific probability of loss of offsite power given a LOCA.
- support development of the regulatory guides needed for implementing the recommended risk-informed alternative rule.

This work is estimated to take approximately 9 months and up to 0.5 FTE and cost about \$350K. The staff will continue to perform the technical work needed to support the rulemakings. The staff will begin developing the related proposed rulemaking upon Commission approval (i.e., receipt of the SRM), and expects to provide this proposed rulemaking within 12 months.

The staff believes that the outcomes of this rulemaking will be that safety will either be maintained or enhanced; NRC activities and decision-making will be more effective, efficient and realistic; and unnecessary regulatory burden will be reduced; and that public confidence will also be maintained if we effectively communicate how safety will be maintained. With respect to the unnecessary burden reduction, industry estimates (letter from R. Bryan, WOG),

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<sup>3</sup>As noted before, the recommendations provided here are also limited to changes in the ECCS requirements. Additional changes, not yet studied, could also “spin-off (see Footnote 2).”

indicate that this risk-informed alternative could result in additional savings of \$400K/year/unit up to \$1200K/year/unit, depending on the specific plant and scope of changes.

### **Feasibility Assessment of Additional Changes to 10 CFR 50.46**

The staff believes that additional changes to 50.46 may also have merit, and will continue to perform the technical work to determine its feasibility. More specifically, the extent of potential change to 50.46 is dependent on the state-of-knowledge of the frequency of LOCAs of various break sizes. For example, if a set of LOCAs can be demonstrated to have a collective mean frequency of occurrence of below  $10^{-4}$  per year (/yr), some regulatory relief may be appropriate in terms of the level of conservatism and redundancy required in the design. If a set of LOCAs can be demonstrated to have a collective mean frequency of occurrence of below  $10^{-5}$ /yr, it may be appropriate to remove these LOCAs from the plant design basis, as long as some mitigative capability remains in the plant, e.g., there is an expectation of success under accident management. Lastly, if a set of LOCAs can be demonstrated to have a collective mean frequency of occurrence of below  $10^{-6}$ /yr, it may be appropriate to remove these LOCAs from the plant design basis. Attachment 2 provides a detailed discussion of the needed technical work.

With the current state-of-knowledge on the frequencies of large breaks, the staff believes that some changes can now be made. These changes are included in the rulemakings recommended above. The staff plans to continue to improve the state-of-knowledge of LOCA frequencies and to continue to assess the feasibility of further changes to 50.46. As part of this, the staff will continue to meet with representatives of the nuclear industry in public meetings to address a set of technical issues. These issues include, for example, initial flaw distributions, degradation mechanisms, material response and uncertainty analysis (see Appendix A of Attachment 2 for more detail). Resolution of the technical issues will be pursued as part of the staff's feasibility assessment. If found feasible, the staff will recommend additional changes, potentially including rulemaking to change the wording in 50.46 and Appendices A and K of Part 50 which would allow the licensee to use an alternate pipe size, subject to some level of NRC approval.

Resource requirements for this feasibility study, i.e., to support a rigorous analysis of LOCA frequencies, could be significant. It is estimated to take 2-3 years and up to 2.4 FTE and cost about \$1.2 million. With respect to the potential benefit, industry estimates<sup>4</sup> indicate that this redefinition of a large-break LOCA could potentially result in a total savings to industry in the range \$100K/year/unit up to \$5500K/year/unit and a potential one-time savings up to \$8300K (for baffle barrel bolt replacement), depending on the specific plant and scope of changes (and the degree to which previous changes were implemented).

### **Other Option 3 Activities**

GDC 35 requires that the ECCS safety function be accomplished assuming a single failure. As indicated above, the staff recommends replacing this single failure criterion in its recommended alternative rule, but only as it affects ECCS. However, the single failure

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<sup>4</sup>Letter from R. Bryan, WOG; and WOG letter from L. Liberatori, Jr., to T. Essig (NRC), "Westinghouse Owners Group: NRC Review of WCAP-14748 (Proprietary), Revision 0, and WCAP-14749, Revision 0 (Non-Proprietary), 'Justification of Increasing Postulated Break Opening Times in Westinghouse Pressurized Water Reactors'," December 10, 1988.

criterion, as discussed in Appendix A of Part 50, is applied to more than just the ECCS. GDCs 17, 34, 38, 41 and 44 also contain the single failure criterion. In addition, the footnote to the definition also states that *“Single failures of passive components in electric systems should be assumed in designing against a single failure. The conditions under which a single failure of a passive component in a fluid system should be considered in designing the system against a single failure are under development.”*

The staff believes that a generic change to the Part 50 Appendix A single failure criterion definition may be warranted and intends to assess the feasibility of a single generic change under Option 3. This could be a very significant change to Part 50, so the feasibility study will include careful consideration of implications. The Option 3 framework will be used, as well as internal and external stakeholders meetings, to ensure that fundamental regulatory principles are not inadvertently compromised. Such a risk-informed definition would also address the Commission’s guidance in the SRM of February 3, 2000 which stated *“the staff should also review safety issues noted in Part 50 as being ‘under consideration’ or ‘under development,’ e.g., .... failure of passive components..., as discussed in footnotes ... 2 to the Definitions and Explanations of Appendix A, and consider their resolution.”* As discussed below, the staff will reassess the priority of this work late this year.

The staff, as part of Option 3, has also begun to investigate changes to the special treatment technical requirements of Part 50. The staff has deferred further work on this to better focus its resources on assessments of 50.44 and 50.46, but will reassess its priority late this year.

#### **Stakeholder Communication:**

The staff has held several meetings with stakeholders to communicate, receive feedback on, and enhance public confidence in the technical merit of the staff’s work. In addition, the staff has had several discussions with the ACRS (both the sub- and the full committee) and plans to continue to meet with them on a regular basis. The staff has continued to maintain the interactive Web site<sup>5</sup>. As information is ready for stakeholder review, it is posted to this Web page (and placed in the public document room for those who do not have internet access).

The principal stakeholder feedback has included comments on the need to complete 50.44 and 50.46 rulemakings and various comments on the framework, which have been incorporated into the version used in the assessment of 50.46, and owner’s groups’ input with respect to redefining the large-break LOCA design basis accident. An updated version of the framework addressing stakeholder, including ACRS, comments will be issued in August 2001.

#### **RESOURCES:**

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<sup>5</sup>The Web site is accessed via the NRC Web site under the Nuclear Reactors icon, and then selecting the “Risk-Informed Part 50 Initiatives” line item, followed by the “Risk-Informed Part 50, Changes to Technical Requirements (Option 3)” line item.

It is the staff's intent that the first priority for the Option 3 resources for FY 2002 and FY 2003 will be to complete the technical work and rulemaking support for 50.44 and the recommended 50.46 rulemaking(s).<sup>6</sup>

While the staff priority is to focus efforts on 50.44 and 50.46 (and 50.61), input from stakeholders will be solicited at a workshop towards the end of this calendar year on the priority and schedule for additional candidate regulations to be risk-informed. This discussion of priorities will include the application of the revised single failure criterion to all of Part 50 and the modification of special treatment requirements.

Staff resources for proceeding with rulemaking(s) on 50.46 and the associated technical work, and for completing the recommended longer-term feasibility study on additional changes to 50.46, are estimated as follows:

Staff Activity	Schedule	Budget
Perform rulemaking to change 50.46 to replace current prescriptive ECCS acceptance criteria and revise requirements for evaluation model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop proposed rule (NRR)</li> <li>• Perform supporting technical work (RES)</li> </ul>	12 months from date of SRM or 2 months after completion of technical work (whichever is later)  On or before July 2002	2.3 FTE, \$0K [FY01: 0.3 FTE FY02: 2.0 FTE]  Up to 1.3 FTE, \$350K [FY01: 0.3 FTE; \$150K FY02: 1.0 FTE; \$200K]
Perform rulemaking to develop voluntary alternative requirements to ensure ECCS reliability commensurate with frequency of challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop proposed rule (NRR)</li> <li>• Perform supporting technical work (RES)</li> </ul>	12 months from date of SRM or 2 months after completion of technical work (whichever is later)  On or before April 2002	2.3 FTE, \$0K [FY01: 0.3 FTE FY02: 2.0 FTE]  Up to 0.5 FTE, \$350K [FY01: 0.1 FTE; \$200K FY02: 0.4 FTE; \$150K]
Continue longer-term feasibility assessment on additional changes to 50.46, including rigorous analysis of LOCA frequencies (RES)	Up to 3 years	Up to 2.4 FTE and \$1,200K [FY01: 0.4 FTE; \$200K FY02: 1.0 FTE; \$500K FY03: 1.0 FTE; \$500K]

These resources are included in the current staff budgets for FY2001 and are included in the budget requests for FY2002 and FY2003.

#### COORDINATION:

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<sup>6</sup>In parallel, the staff is continuing its reevaluation of the technical basis of the Pressurized Thermal Shock rule (10 CFR 50.61) to reflect results of research on reactor vessels, new risk methods development, operational data, and Commission policies. This work, described in SECY-00-0140 and SECY-01-0045, will be completed as a high priority project in FY2002.

The Office of the General Counsel has reviewed this paper and has no legal objections. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this paper for resource implications and has no objections.

The topic of risk-informed changes to 50.46 has been the subject of continuing interactions between the staff and ACRS. The staff briefed the ACRS on March 16 and June 6, 2001, and modified the report to reflect comments received. The staff will brief the ACRS on the final version of this paper on July 9 and 11, 2001. A letter from ACRS on the staff's paper is expected following the July briefing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The staff recommends that the Commission approve proceeding with rulemaking for:

- modification of the existing 10 CFR 50.46 and Appendix K, and
- development of a risk-informed alternative to 10 CFR 50.46, Appendix K and GDC 35.

In order to improve the timeliness of these rulemaking(s), the staff does not intend to prepare a rulemaking plan, but rather to proceed with the technical work supporting the rulemaking(s) and expects to deliver proposed rule(s) to the Commission within 12 months of Commission approval (i.e., receipt of Commission SRM).

Because of the potential benefits of the recommended changes and the high interest by the public, the staff recommends that the Office of the Secretary release this paper to the public 10 days from the date of the paper.

***/RA by William F. Kane Acting for/***

William D. Travers  
Executive Director  
for Operations

Attachments: 1. Feasibility study on 50.46  
2. Technical work to support rulemaking

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WITS#: 199900062

RES# 2001001

\* Previously concurred.

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(RES File Code) RES \_\_\_\_\_