

September 14, 2001

Mr. Ralph E. Beedle
Senior Vice President and Chief
Nuclear Officer, Nuclear Generation
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Beedle:

Thank you for your letter of June 28, 2001, and the enclosure entitled "Safety Benefits of Risk Assessment at U.S. Nuclear Power Plants," developed by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) for NEI. The Commission agrees with your statement that "it is important for the NRC to communicate to all stakeholders how PRA has been developed and used, and to provide a context for our ongoing efforts."

The NRC has a number of means in place for communicating with stakeholders about the development and use of PRA. The NRC's Strategic Plan describes the role of risk-informed regulation in the agency's activities and, as you know, such regulation is built on insights derived from PRAs. The Commission's PRA Policy Statement provides guidance on the use of PRA in a manner that complements traditional engineering practices. The Risk-Informed Regulation Implementation Plan (RIRIP) integrates the agency's risk-informed activities and describes the staff's actions to increase the use of risk information. The RIRIP is updated periodically to keep both internal and external stakeholders informed of the staff's intentions in this area. Although we have means in place to communicate our perspective on PRAs, the NRC will continue to use public forums such as Agency conferences, workshops, meetings, and the external website to convey how PRA information is assisting with risk-informed decision-making.

The EPRI paper is a helpful resource and provides a historical and contemporary context for the use of risk assessment in nuclear power plant operations. I believe it will contribute to improving public confidence in the use of risk-insights as it provides a very helpful foundation for enhancing public understanding.

I, and my Commission colleagues, look forward to continuing our interactions with you and other stakeholders as we collectively use risk information to sharpen our focus on safety and to improve the regulatory process.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve