

August 21, 2001

Dr. George E. Apostolakis, Chairman
Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO JULY 23, 2001, ACRS LETTER TO CHAIRMAN MESERVE,
"CIRCUMFERENTIAL CRACKING OF PWR VESSEL HEAD PENETRATIONS"

Dear Dr. Apostolakis:

Thank you for your letter to Chairman Meserve dated July 23, 2001, outlining the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) conclusions and recommendations regarding the proposed bulletin on circumferential cracking of pressurized water reactor (PWR) vessel head penetration (VHP) nozzles. The staff appreciates that the ACRS was able to complete its review and provide recommendations in a timely manner to support expeditious issuance of the bulletin.

The ACRS recommended issuance of a bulletin on VHP nozzles; the bulletin was issued on August 3, 2001. The ACRS also recommended that the staff urgently address technical issues associated with risk assessment, the effectiveness of inspection techniques, and the completeness of damage accumulation prediction. The staff, through its regulatory and research programs, has begun work in these areas, as part of an assessment of the need for additional regulatory actions to address cracking in VHP nozzles. We will provide the ACRS with an update on this staff assessment early next year once the staff has completed its review of both the licensee responses to the bulletin and inspection results from fall outages.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

cc: Chairman Meserve
Commissioner Dicus
Commissioner McGaffigan
Commissioner Merrifield
SECY

