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PETITION/RULE PRM 50-75
(67 FR 16654)



Tennessee Valley Authority, 1101 Market Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402-2801

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USNRC

June 25, 2002 (9:53AM)

June 21, 2002

OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Secretary
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
ATTN: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Gentlemen:

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION (NRC) - COMMENTS ON NUCLEAR ENERGY INSTITUTE (NEI) PETITION FOR RULEMAKING PRM-50-75, LARGE BREAK LOCA REDEFINITION PROPOSED RULEMAKING (VOL. 67 FEDERAL REGISTER 16654, DATED APRIL 8, 2002)

TVA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the subject petition for rulemaking. TVA views the proposal in the petition as an important element in creating a regulatory structure that reflects today's state of knowledge and operating experience.

The double-ended break design basis required by the current regulations has far-reaching effects on plant design and operation. However, over 30 years of operating experience and improvements in engineering knowledge and methods have shown that a double-ended break of the largest reactor coolant system piping should no longer be a dominant light-water reactor safety criterion. Adoption by the NRC of the proposed petition would enable more regulatory and industry energy to be focused on areas that are of more benefit to the safe and reliable operation of the nation's nuclear power plants.

The existing regulations are inconsistent in their treatment of the dynamic effects and other design effects of a postulated design basis pipe break. General Design Criterion 4 allows the use of small reactor coolant system breaks or the application of leak before break in the design of pipe restraints and in the mechanical design of the core internals including the fuel. Yet, similar considerations cannot be used in the thermal hydraulic design of the core and associated core cooling systems. Adoption of the proposed petition would allow the NRC to make the regulations more consistent, which would be expected to increase confidence in the regulatory process.

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TVA views the regulatory change proposed in the NEI petition as an important step in the NRC's process to improve the regulatory structure. From the senior management level on down, the industry has actively supported redefinition of the maximum break size and frequently encouraged the NRC to move forward with it as the highest priority for risk-informing the technical requirements in the regulations. It is recognized that there are technical issues to be resolved related to the implementation of the revised rule. However, the resolution of these implementation issues should occur in parallel with the rulemaking, and the rulemaking should not hinge on the prior resolution of all implementation issues.

We concur with recent statements of one Commissioner that ". . . the Large Break LOCA is obsolete now, a true anachronism in today's safety envelope. It should be abandoned in favor of what really affects safety and is risk significant." We believe that the NEI proposed rule will enable us to move toward this objective.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (423) 751-2508.

Sincerely,



Mark J. Burzynski
Manager
Nuclear Licensing

cc: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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