

July 28, 2002

The Honorable Harry Reid, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Infrastructure,
and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has forwarded the enclosed proposed changes to the Commission's rules in 10 CFR Part 50, "Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities," to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Over the past 20 years, the NRC has sponsored a research program to improve its understanding of combustible gas generation and behavior in nuclear power reactors during accidents. The studies showed that the hydrogen release stemming from a design-basis loss-of-coolant accident was not risk significant because it would not lead to early containment failure. Therefore, some hydrogen monitoring and control equipment requirements can be relaxed without compromising safety. Sufficient capability remains to mitigate any longer term challenges to containment integrity.

The proposed rule amends the NRC's standards for combustible gas control in light-water-cooled power reactors by setting new baseline regulations for current licensees and consolidating combustible gas control regulations for future applicants and licensees. This action stems from the Commission's ongoing effort to risk-inform its regulations. The proposed rule will reduce the regulatory burden on present and future power reactor licensees by eliminating the requirements for hydrogen recombiners and hydrogen purge systems and relaxing the requirements for hydrogen and oxygen monitoring equipment to make them commensurate with their safety significance.

Finally, the proposed rule provides for public participation. The NRC staff will notice the proposed rule in the *Federal Register* and make it available for public comment.

In summary, the proposed rule furthers the Commission's strategic goals of maintaining safety and protecting the environment, reducing unnecessary regulatory burden, increasing public confidence, and increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Dennis K. Rathbun, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs

Enclosure: Proposed rule

cc: Senator James M. Inhofe

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*See previous concurrence

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July 28, 2002

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Dennis K. Rathbun, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs

Enclosure: Proposed rule

cc: Representative Rick Boucher
 The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
 Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality
 Committee on Energy and Commerce
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

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