

March 28, 2003

Dr. Mario V. Bonaca, Chairman  
Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

SUBJECT: PRESSURIZED THERMAL SHOCK (PTS) REEVALUATION PROJECT:  
TECHNICAL BASES FOR POTENTIAL REVISION TO PTS SCREENING  
CRITERIA

Dear Dr. Bonaca,

Thank you for your letter dated February 21, 2003, on the above subject. As you are aware, the staff has been working on a formal reevaluation of the technical bases for the PTS rule (10 CFR 50.61) since 1999. This project is a key element of our initiative to risk-inform 10 CFR 50. We greatly appreciate the interactions that the ACRS has had, and continues to have with the staff on this subject. These interactions have facilitated enhanced focus and rigor in this highly complex technical effort.

With regard to your primary conclusions and recommendations stemming from the ACRS meetings on February 6-8, 2003, I would like to offer the following response:

1. We agree with your conclusion that the PTS reevaluation project has established the comprehensive technical bases necessary for consideration of a revision to the PTS rule. However, we recognize that additional work remains to be completed as described in 2 and 3 below. The key stakeholders involved in the project will be working closely together to expeditiously complete the technical basis effort.
2. We also agree that the draft summary report and associated documentation is in need of revision to more clearly describe the basic phenomena, issues and approaches. We appreciate the detailed comments that ACRS has provided both as a committee and individually. The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and industry participants are also currently reviewing the draft summary report. Following consideration of comments from the key stakeholders who have been actively involved in the project (NRR, RES, Industry, ACRS), the report will be finalized. After the report is completed, it will be distributed to the key stakeholders and made publicly available. In addition, the staff will be producing and finalizing a structured set of reports that support the summary report. The overall documentation, summary, and supporting reports will include a systematic assessment of uncertainties in key variables and explain which factors have the largest impact on changes in the predicted reactor vessel failure frequency. We would anticipate further discussions with the ACRS when this documentation is finalized.

3. As you have noted, a formal peer review is a key element of this project. We also agree that revision and finalization of the appropriate documentation is critical in performing a meaningful peer review. The Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research is currently pursuing initiation of a formal peer review in parallel with finalization of the documentation since certain aspects of the review (availability of reviewers, contracting, etc.) are long lead-time items. The staff is currently developing a detailed plan of actions and milestones for the peer review process.

In summary, I would like to express my thanks to the ACRS for providing a continuing and thorough critique of this important effort. As the staff moves into the concluding phase of the effort, we look forward to continuing productive interactions with ACRS.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

William D. Travers  
Executive Director  
for Operations

cc: Chairman Meserve  
Commissioner Dicus  
Commissioner Diaz  
Commissioner McGaffigan  
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