

April 29, 2004

Mr. C. Wesley Rowley, Vice President
Nuclear Codes & Standards
The American Society of Mechanical Engineers
Three Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016-5990

Dear Mr. Rowley:

Thank you for your March 15, 2004, letter that provided comments on the "Commission-Approved Implementation of a Phased Approach to Develop PRAs to Adequately Support Risk-Informed Applications and Regulatory Decision-Making." In your letter, you stated that the release of standards ASME-RA-S-2002, "Standards for Probabilistic Risk Assessment for Nuclear Power Plant Applications," and ANS-58.21-2003, "External Events PRA Methodology," represent major advances that will benefit the entire industry and promote regulatory efficiency. I agree with your statement and encourage the continued good communications between your organizations and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff, which contributed to these successes.

In your letter, you also provide your perspectives regarding the implementation date for Phase 3, as stated in the Commission's December 18, 2003, memorandum to the staff, and as it relates to potential future standards development. I assure you that the staff intends to develop an action plan that includes a schedule that will support stakeholder needs and will be consistent with Commission direction. The schedule being developed for staff endorsement and licensee implementation of external events, low-power shutdown, and internal fire standards is, in part, based on schedules that the staff received during their participation in American Nuclear Society committee meetings. Further, as the action plan is developed and implemented, we will continue to work with all our stakeholders in soliciting comments.

Codes and standards associated with risk management, and their underlying principles, need to be consistent and compatible. I support the formulation of the new Nuclear Risk Management Coordinating Committee which will consist of representatives from the various standards developing organizations (SDOs), and the NRC. The staff intends to continue to work with the different SDOs in developing the various PRA standards. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Drouin of my staff, (301) 415-6675, e-mail mxd@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

cc: J. F. Mallay

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Mr. James F. Mallay, Chair
Standards Board
American Nuclear Society
555 North Kensington Avenue
La Grange Park, Illinois 60526

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