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CODES & STANDARDS

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Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

OFFICE OF SECRETARY  
RULEMAKINGS AND  
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

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**Attention:** Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff

**Subject:** **Comments on Industry Codes and Standards, 10 CFR Part 50, RIN 3150-AH76**

**Reference:** 1. Proposed Rules, *Federal Register*, Vol. 72, No. 65, pp. 16731-16741, Thursday, April 5, 2007

**Enclosure:** 1. ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Dear Secretary:

ASME is pleased to have the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions on your Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), 10 CFR Part 50, RIN 3150-AH76, Industry Codes and Standards, Proposed Amended Requirements, published in Reference 1.

Specifically, ASME supports NRC's endorsement of its Nuclear Codes and Standards now cited in the Code of Federal Regulations in 10 CFR 50.55a. It is our understanding that within this proposed rulemaking, the NRC is amending this regulation to incorporate by reference the 2004 Edition of Section III, Division 1 and Section XI, Division 1 of the ASME Boiler and Pressure Vessel (BPV) Code and the 2004 Edition of the ASME Operation and Maintenance (OM) Code.

With the proposed endorsement of these new Code Editions, the amendment specifically states that the NRC has no new proposed limitations with respect to the endorsement of the 2004 Edition of Section III. For the endorsement of the ASME BPV Code Section XI, proposed limitations are provided on the use of the 2004 Edition and the use of two Section XI Code Cases N-729-1 and N-722 that are included in the amendment. For the endorsement of the ASME OM Code, 2004 Edition, only one editorial change is being proposed. Additionally, ASME is pleased to see that some of the modifications that are included in this amendment reflect the removal of some existing limitations in the regulation that ASME has previously addressed with the NRC staff. Removal of these limitations will enhance the use of ASME Nuclear Codes and Standards.

Enclosure 1 provides ASME comments and suggestions to the modifications, limitations, and conditions contained in this amendment for the purpose of enhancing the use of ASME Nuclear Codes and Standards within the nuclear industry and in support of

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maintaining the public health and safety without placing unnecessary burden on the nuclear industry. Thus, Enclosure 1 is provided for the use of the NRC staff to support, reconsider, remove, or delete its modifications, and limitations where comments and suggestions are provided. It is hoped that upon review of the ASME comments and suggestions in Enclosure 1 that the NRC staff will be able to allow the necessary changes to be made or modify the limitations in the amendment to such a degree as to fully endorse the ASME Nuclear Codes and Standards contained in this proposed rulemaking.

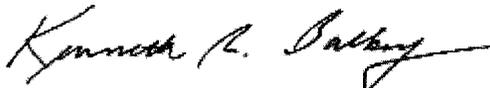
During the ASME review of the items contained in this proposed rulemaking, we have determined that ASME does not support four of them. The ASME comments and suggestions in Enclosure 1 are primarily based on technical attributes, but the significance of two of these items goes beyond technical concerns and needs to be separately addressed by the NRC as follows:

- (1) *ASME Section XI, Item 4, 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xx)—System Leakage Tests.* Beyond the technical issues, ASME believes that this modification is a backfit for Licensees that are currently using the 2003 Addenda of Section XI and should be addressed under the Backfit Rule in accordance with 10 CFR 50.109.
- (2) *ASME Section XI, Item 8, 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)(D)—Augmented Inspection of PWR Reactor Vessel Heads Endorsement of Code Case N-729-1.* ASME was requested by the NRC to develop this Code Case and spent several years of its volunteer resources to complete this effort as a top priority task. Also, ASME has made special effort to interface with NRC staff, including meetings at NRC headquarters, to address concerns related to cracking in Alloy 600 materials. In this proposed rulemaking, the NRC has discounted these efforts by the added conditions that are proposed in this new amendment to make Code Case N-729-1 equivalent to the existing NRC Order EA-03-09. ASME is disappointed that the NRC has taken this position given that Code Case N-729-1 was developed and approved using the latest available technical information under an ANSI-approved consensus process. ASME requests that the NRC address and resolve this concern as a top priority issue as part of this proposed rulemaking.

ASME looks forward to working with the NRC staff to resolve the comments and suggestions that we have provided in this letter. Additionally, in that spirit of cooperation ASME would like to take this opportunity to offer to meet with NRC staff at their earliest convenience to discuss these comments and suggestions for the purpose of possibly helping to resolve these issues prior to the final rulemaking.

If you have any questions or if you can provide a suggested date for our proposed meeting, please direct them to Mr. Kevin Ennis, ASME Director, Nuclear Codes and Standards by telephone at (212) 591-7075 or by e-mail ([ennisk@asme.org](mailto:ennisk@asme.org)).

Very Truly Yours,



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cc: Members, ASME Board on Nuclear Codes and Standards  
Members, ASME Boiler and Pressure Vessel Standards Committee  
Members, ASME Committee on Operation and Maintenance of Nuclear Power  
Plants  
Members, ASME Subcommittee on Nuclear Power (SC III)  
Members, ASME Subcommittee on Nuclear Inservice Inspection (SC XI)

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>1. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Remove 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xi) – Regarding the limitation on the application of IWB-1220.</p> <p>Background is provided in the FRN on page 16733</p>	<p>● ASME fully supports the removal of this limitation from the regulation based on the background provided by the FRN.</p>
<p>2. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Remove 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xiii) – Regarding the provision to allow the use of Code Case N-523-1.</p> <p>Background is provided in the FRN on page 16733</p>	<p>● ASME fully supports the removal of this provision from the regulation based on the acceptance of Code Case N-523-2 in RG. 1.147, Revision 14.</p>
<p>3. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Modify 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xv) – The modification is to change this provision to allow the use of the 2004 Edition for Appendix VIII Specimen Set and Qualification Requirements.</p> <p>The modification is identified in the FRN on page 16733 and is shown as it proposed to be incorporated into the regulation on page 16740.</p>	<p>● ASME fully supports this modification to the regulation allowing the use of the 2004 Edition of Section XI to be used to meet these Appendix VIII requirements.</p>
<p>4. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Modify 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xx) – This modification will add a limitation on the use of IWA-4540(a)(2) which will not allow this paragraph to be used from the 2003 Addenda to the 2004 Edition.</p>	<p>◆ ASME does not support adding this limitation to the regulation.</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>Background for this modification is reprinted below and is in the FRN on pages 16733 and 16734 along with the proposed limitation that is on page 16740</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xx)—System Leakage Tests</p> <p>Paragraph 50.55a(b)(2)(xx) would be revised to require that after system leakage tests performed during repair and replacement activities by welding or brazing under the 2003 Addenda through the latest edition and addenda incorporated by reference in 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2), NDE must be performed in accordance with IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of Section XI. This provision would require that (1) the NDE method and acceptance criteria of the 1992 edition or later of Section III be met prior to returning the system to service, and that (2) a system leakage test be performed in accordance with IWA-5000 prior to or as part of returning the system to service.</p> <p>Subarticle IWA-4540(a) of the 1995 edition of ASME Section XI requires that after welding on a pressure retaining boundary or installing an item by welding or brazing, a system hydrostatic pressure test be performed. The industry asserted that the hydrostatic pressure test creates a significant hardship. Subsequently, the ASME Committee developed Code Case N-416-3, "Alternative Pressure Test Requirements for Welded Repairs or Installation of Replacement Items by Welding Class 1, 2, and 3, Section XI, Div. 1," which provides an alternative to the hydrostatic pressure test. (NRC has accepted Code Case N-416-3 in RG 1.147, Revision 14 which has been incorporated by reference and approved in 10 CFR 50.55a (70 FR 56809; Sept 29, 2005).</p>	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>First there needs to be an understanding of the ASME Section XI requirement contained in IWA-4540(a)(2). The NDE of the 1992 Edition of ASME Section III (or later editions or addenda) is not required to be performed after the system leakage test. The NDE is performed after any welding and prior to the system leakage test. The system leakage test is then performed often during the course of returning the system back into service.</p> <p>Now a discussion of the need to perform the NDE using the acceptance criteria of the 1992 Edition (or later editions or addenda) is needed. The ASME Subcommittee XI on Nuclear Inservice Inspection believes that the hydrostatic test that has been in the construction codes and carried over to the inservice inspection code has been misunderstood for some time. The construction code pressure requirements used for performing the hydrostatic test is not performed at a pressure that constitutes a challenge to the material. A hydrostatic test at this pressure does not contribute to safety any more than a pressure test at operating pressure. Therefore, from a safety perspective, the hydrostatic test is not used to verify the structural integrity of the component or system being tested. It only proves leak tightness, which is also accomplished by a system leakage test. Hence the end result of the hydrostatic test and the system leakage test is the same (leak tightness is verified). The additional NDE being suggested by the NRC is of no value in verifying leak tightness and thus is not related to the safety significance of not performing a hydrostatic test. The construction code NDE that is implemented by ASME Section XI (IWA-4500) is all that is needed to verify any welding discontinuities that could affect the required joint efficiency for the required quality of the weld or brazed joint.</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>Code Case N-416-3 allows that instead of performing a hydrostatic pressure test for welding and brazing repair/replacement activities, performing a system leakage test if two requirements are met. The first requirement is that a NDE be performed on welded or brazed repairs and fabrication and installation joints in accordance with the methods and acceptance criteria of the applicable subsection of the 1992 Edition of Section III. Depending on the category of the weld, the NDE must consist of, in most cases, radiography and examination by either the liquid penetrant or magnetic particle method. The second requirement is that prior to or immediately upon return to service, a visual examination (VT-2) of welded or brazed repairs, fabrication, and installation joints be performed in conjunction with a system leakage test at nominal operating pressure and temperature in accordance with paragraph IWA-5000 of the 1992 edition of Section XI. The technical provisions of ASME Code Case N-416-3 were incorporated into the 2001 Edition of ASME Section XI, IWA- 4540(a) and maintained, with minor editorial changes, through the 2002 Addenda to ASME Section XI. The 2003 Addenda of the Code, IWA-4540(a) eliminated reference to the NDE requirements of the 1992 Edition of Section III. When the ASME developed the 2003 Addenda, the arguments in support of the Code action state that imposing the NDE requirement in accordance with Section III (i.e., radiography) on all repair and replacement activities is excessively burdensome. The industry argued that the purpose of the radiography requirements is to support the piping joint efficiency factors used in the design. As such, the requirements are appropriately imposed by the construction code or the design specification but radiography for repair and replacement activities would be excessive.</p> <p>The industry also contended that a system leakage test compared to a hydrostatic pressure test revealed very few cases in which leakage</p>	<p><u>Comments And Suggestions For Consideration</u></p> <p>Due to the safety equivalence of a hydrostatic test and a system leakage test explained above, and understanding that the hydrostatic test is not any different than the system leakage test (which is still required by the ASME Code), the additional requirement to add the NDE methodology and acceptance criteria of the 1992 Edition of ASME Section III is unwarranted. With the background above ASME requests that the NRC remove the limitation of using the 2002 Addenda (IWA-4540(a)(2)) for repair/replacement activities performed under the 2003 Addenda and the 2004 Edition of ASME Section XI.</p> <p>Additionally, beyond the technical comments provided above, there are Licensees who are currently using the provisions of IWA-4540(a) in the 2003 Addenda without this limitation and they are in full compliance with the regulation, but that may not be the case if this limitation goes into the regulation. The NRC <u>Backfit Rule Analysis Discussion</u> needs to be updated to address this potential position that this modification could have on these Licensees as a result of incorporating this limitation into the regulation and making it applicable to the 2003 Addenda. ASME believes that this modification for these Licensees is a backfit under 10 CFR 50.109 and should be addressed under that rule.</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>From a safety perspective, there is no need to require a limitation to use the NDE methodology and acceptance criteria of the 1992 Edition of ASME Section III in order to allow a system leakage test in lieu of a hydrostatic test for repair/replacement activities performed in accordance with IWA-4540(a)(2).</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>occurred at the hydrostatic pressure but not at the lower pressure of the system leakage test. Those cases involved only a small amount of leakage and the source of the leakage would not have been detected by additional NDE and is therefore not warranted.</p> <p>NRC observes that the arguments to eliminate the NDE are from an operational rather than a safety perspective. A safety assessment has not been provided to demonstrate that without volumetric examination, a system leakage pressure test alone provides a level of safety equivalent to a hydrostatic pressure test, only that a volumetric examination is excessively burdensome. NRC therefore concludes that to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection to public health and safety, when performing a system leakage test in lieu of a hydrostatic test after repair/replacement activities, a NDE must be performed. It must be performed in accordance with the NDE provision in IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of Section XI because the agency has already accepted this provision by virtue of approving Code Case N-416-3 in RG 1.147, Revision 14. That provision states that: (a) The NDE method and acceptance criteria of the 1992 edition or later of Section III shall be met prior to return to service; and (b) a system leakage test shall be performed in accordance with IWA-5000 prior to or as part of returning to service.</p> <p><u>Backfit Rule Analysis Discussion</u></p> <p>FRN page 16738 - 4. <i>Add 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xx) To Require NDE Provision in IWA- 4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of Section XI When Performing System Leakage Tests</i></p> <p>Subarticle IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of the ASME Code, Section XI, requires a NDE be performed in combination with a system</p>	

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>leakage test during repair/replacement activities. Subarticle IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2003 Addenda through later editions and addenda of the ASME Code, Section XI, does not specify a NDE after a system leakage test. The proposed addition would require, as part of repair and replacement activities, that a NDE be performed per IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of the ASME Code, Section XI, after a system leakage test is performed per subarticle IWA- 4540(a)(2) of the 2003 Addenda through later editions and addenda of the ASME Code, Section XI.</p> <p>As it is stated above, when the NRC takes exception to a later ASME BPV Code provision but merely retains the existing requirement, prohibits the use of the later Code provision, limits the use of the later Code provision, or supplements the provisions in a later Code, the Backfit Rule does not apply because the NRC is not imposing new requirements. The addition retains the system leakage test requirement in IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2003 Addenda through the later editions and addenda of the ASME Code, Section XI, but supplements it with the NDE of IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of the Code. The proposed addition does not represent a new staff requirement because the NDE requirement is specified in previous addenda of the Code. Therefore, this change is not considered as a backfit under 10 CFR 50.109.</p> <p><u>Proposed 10 CFR 50.55a Amendment And Limitation</u></p> <p>System Leakage Tests</p> <p>(B) The NDE provision in IWA-4540(a)(2) of the 2002 Addenda of Section XI must be applied when performing system leakage tests after repair and replacement activities performed by welding or brazing on a</p>	

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>pressure retaining boundary using the 2003 Addenda through the latest edition and addenda incorporated by reference in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.</p>	
<p>5. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Modify 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi) – The modification is to add a limitation that visual examinations will be performed on the inner radius of Class 1 Pressurizer and Steam Generator Nozzles based on the previous Reactor Vessel Nozzle limitation and that these examinations shall use a 1-mil (0.001 inch) width wire or crack, for the enhancement of the visual examination with an added limiting assumption on the flaw aspect ratio (i.e., <math>a/l=0.5</math>).</p> <p>Background for this modification is reprinted below and is in the FRN on page 16734 along with the proposed condition that is on page 16740</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi)—Table IWB–2500–1 Examination Requirements</p> <p>Paragraph 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi)(A) would be revised to be consistent with the condition for Code Case N–648–1, “Alternative Requirements for Inner Radius Examination of Class 1 Reactor Vessel Nozzles, Section XI, Division 1,” in RG 1.147, Revision 14, which requires the assumption of a limiting flaw aspect ratio when using the allowable flaw length criteria in Table IWB–3512–1 during an enhanced visual examination. <i>The proposed revision would state:</i> “A visual examination with enhanced magnification that has a resolution sensitivity to detect a 1-mil (0.001 inch) width wire or crack, using the</p>	<p>◆ ASME does not support modifying this limitation to require visual examination of Class 1 Pressurizer and Steam Generator Nozzle inner radius areas based on the previous Reactor Vessel Nozzle inner radius limitation and ASME also believes that the original limitation is unnecessary.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>ASME Section XI Subcommittee on Nuclear Inservice Inspection has already prepared and approved a letter on February 1, 2007, Action Item No. BC05-1672, to the NRC Section XI staff representative on the original limitation. That letter also includes a reference to Code Case N-619 because the same condition that the NRC has placed on Code Case N-648-1 has also been applied to Code Case N-619. The letter was scheduled to be included in a package to be sent to the NRC addressing limitations and conditions associated with other Section XI items at a later date. In light of this rulemaking issue the content of that letter with slight modifications is reprinted below.</p> <p>The requirement for inspection of reactor vessel nozzle inner radius regions in Class 1 systems has been in effect for a very long time, and has not resulted in any inspection findings in any of the reactor vessel nozzles of interest. The original requirement was included as a result of a cracking event in a non-nuclear vessel, which occurred near the time when the ASME Section XI inspection requirements were being</p>

LEGEND

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- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>allowable flaw length criteria in Table IWB-3512-1, 1997 Addenda through the latest edition and addenda incorporated by reference in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, with a limiting assumption on the flaw aspect ratio (i.e., <math>a/l=0.5</math>, where <math>a</math> and <math>l</math> are the depth and length of the crack, respectively), may be performed instead of an ultrasonic examination * * *. This limitation is needed because visual examination cannot determine the depth of cracks. A visual examination requirement may be applied only when a limiting flaw aspect ratio of 0.5 is assumed. A flaw aspect ratio of less than 0.5 would not be conservative. As shown in Table IWB-3512-1, there are no flaw aspect ratios higher than 0.5.</p> <p><u>Backfit Rule Analysis Discussion</u></p> <p>FRN page 16730 – 5. <i>Revise 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi) To Be Consistent With the NRC’s Imposed Condition for Code Case N-648-1 in RG 1.147, Revision 14</i></p> <p>This change would align the conditions imposed on visual examinations in 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi) with the conditions imposed on Code Case N-648-1 in RG 1.147, Revision 14 (70 R 5680; Sept 29, 2005). The imposed conditions do not represent a new staff position. Therefore, this change is not considered as a backfit under 10 CFR 50.109.</p> <p><u>Proposed 10 CFR 50.55a Amendment And Limitation</u></p> <p>(xxi) * * *</p> <p>(A) The provisions of Table IWB-2500-1, Examination Category B-D, Full Penetration Welded Nozzles in Vessels, Item B3.40 and B3.60 (Inspection Program A) and Items B3.120 and B3.140 (Inspection Program B) in the 1998 Edition must be applied when using the 1999</p>	<p>established. The original requirement, as instituted in the early 1970s, was a good idea, since there was only limited experience in operating nuclear plants. Today, after some 25 years of operation (over 1000 reactor years), no cracking incidents of any kind in the nozzle inner radius regions (under the scope of the Code Case, which does not include BWR feedwater nozzles) have been found whatsoever.</p> <p>The technical bases for these Code Cases considered first, the extensive types of inspections performed on the nozzle inner radius regions during the fabrication process and inservice inspection results obtained over the past 25 years. Second, structural integrity evaluations were considered to demonstrate that these nozzles have a large tolerance for flaws. Third, risk informed evaluations were performed to demonstrate that failure probability is extremely low under the plant operating conditions and that there is a negligible change in the risk if the inspections are eliminated.</p> <p>The technical bases for these cases were discussed with members of the Commission’s staff before the cases were submitted to Subcommittee XI for approval. The VT-1 of the Reactor Vessel Nozzle inner radii was added to Code Case N-648-1 as a result of these discussions. The VT-1 was considered to be appropriate for the detection of fatigue flaws, the most likely degradation mechanism in this area and was agreed to by the NRC staff members attending the meeting.</p> <p>The subsequent imposition of an enhanced VT-1 examination that was specified in Regulatory Guide 1.147, Rev. 13, (corrected reprint), dated June 2003, came as a surprise. First, because this technique was never raised as a concern during the previous meetings with the staff, and second, because an enhanced VT-1 is not defined in the Code.</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

ENCLOSURE 1

ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>Addenda through the latest edition and addenda incorporated by reference in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. A visual examination with enhanced magnification that has a resolution sensitivity to detect a 1-mil width wire or crack, utilizing the allowable flaw length criteria in Table IWB-3512-1, 1997 Addenda through the latest edition and addenda incorporated by reference in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, with a limiting assumption on the flaw aspect ratio (i.e., <math>a/l=0.5</math>), may be performed instead of an ultrasonic examination.</p>	<p>ASME XI, Subarticle IWA-2200 defines examination methods. Enhanced VT-1 is a technique developed by the BWRVIP for the detection of IGSCC in reactor vessel internals. Since IGSCC is not a failure mechanism applicable to these nozzle inner radii, it is not appropriate for this application. "Several studies have shown that the VT-1 character heights may provide the same or better resolution than the 1 mil wire." These studies are documented in EPRI Palo Alto, CA., Reports 1011625, "Evaluation of Remote Visual Examination Methods," Dated: December 24, 2005 and 1013537, "Nondestructive Evaluation: Evaluation of Remote Visual Examination Methods," Dated: December 18, 2006.</p> <p><u>Comments And Suggestions For Consideration</u></p> <p>Due to the extensive operating experience which has been recognized by the ASME Code (not the only justification for this comment), the examinations performed during fabrication, the only possible credible degradation mechanism being a fatigue crack that would be virtually growth tolerant for years, the low probability of failure in the inner radii, and the change in risk being orders of magnitude below the RG-1.174 CDF acceptable guidelines, it is suggested that the conditional acceptability requiring a 1-mil (0.001 inch) width wire or crack to allow the use of Code Cases N-619 and N-648-1, and the similar limitation in 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi) that was issued in the FRN (Volume 67, Number 187) on September 26, 2002, does not provide any significant increase in the level of public health and safety and therefore should be removed.</p> <p>Understanding that ASME believes that the original limitation was not necessary certainly helps justify our suggestion that modifying the</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
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ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
	<p>original limitation with this amendment to include a limiting flaw aspect ratio requirement is also unnecessary and should not be incorporated in the regulation.</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>With the background information provided above, we request that the NRC staff review these comments and consider revising their current conditions on the acceptability of Code Case N-619 and N-648-1 and remove the limitation in 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxi) without adding any further additional limitations to require a limited flaw aspect ratio. ASME believes that the NRC staff has not provided an adequate basis that supports this modification or the original limitation and both should be removed with this proposed rulemaking.</p>
<p>6. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Remove 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)(A) – Regarding the provision that requires augmented examination of reactor vessels.</p> <p>Background is provided in the FRN on page 16734.</p>	<p>● ASME fully supports the removal of this provision from the regulation based on the completion of this augmented examination requirement by the industry.</p>
<p>7. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Add 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxviii) – Regarding the addition of a new provision that would identify a publishing error related to an exponent in a Section XI Appendix O equation.</p> <p>Background for this modification is reprinted below and is in the FRN on page 16734 along with the proposed new provision that is on page</p>	<p>◆ ASME does not support this amendment adding this provision to the regulation.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The NRC has identified this error to the public through this proposed rulemaking and the ASME has approved ERRATA on May 18, 2006 to</p>

LEGEND

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- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

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ASME Comments and Suggestions on Modifications, Limitations, and Conditions, 10 CFR 50.55a

Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p>16740</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxviii)—Evaluation Procedure and Acceptance Criteria for PWR Reactor Vessel Head Penetration Nozzles In the 2004 Edition of ASME Section XI, IWA-3660 specifies evaluation procedure and acceptance criteria for flaws that are detected in upper and lower reactor vessel head penetration nozzles in PWRs. The procedure and acceptance criteria in IWB-3660 were adopted from Code Case N-694-1, "Evaluation Procedure and Acceptance Criteria for PWR Reactor Vessel Head Penetration Nozzles Section XI, Division 1." Under IWB-3660, IWB-3662 specifies that the flaw shall be evaluated using analytical procedures such as those described in non-mandatory Appendix O, "Evaluation of Flaws in PWR Reactor Vessel Upper Head Penetration Nozzles," to the ASME Code, Section XI. There is a typographical error in paragraph O-3220(b), equation <math>S_R = [1 - 0.82R]^{-22}</math>. The exponent should be -2.2, not -22. Paragraph 50.55a(b)(2)(xxviii) would be added to the regulation to ensure that the correct exponent is used. The exponent in Appendix O was shown to be erroneous by an NRC report, NUREG/CR-6721, "Effects of Alloy Chemistry, Cold Work, and Water Chemistry on Corrosion Fatigue and Stress Corrosion Cracking of Nickel Alloys and Welds," April 2001.</p> <p><u>Backfit Rule Analysis Discussion</u></p> <p>FRN page 16739 – 6. <i>Add 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(2)(xxviii) To Correct a Typographical Error Regarding an Exponent in the Evaluation of PWR Reactor Vessel Head Penetration Nozzles</i></p> <p>This change would correct a typographical error in an equation used in</p>	<p>correct this error under BC06-642, which will be published this July in the 2007 Edition of Section XI and will be effective back to when this error occurred in Section XI.</p> <p><u>Comments And Suggestions For Consideration</u></p> <p>We suggest that the NRC consider other ways to get this type of information out to the public such as information notices and regulatory issue summaries and this type of provision should not be in the regulation.</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>ASME has corrected this typographical error with ERRATA, and it has been identified in this proposed rulemaking to the public. Therefore, this new provision to the regulation is not needed.</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

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<p>the flaw evaluation in the ASME Section XI. Therefore, this change is not considered as a backfit under 10 CFR 50.109.</p> <p><u>Proposed 10 CFR 50.55a Amendment</u></p> <p>(xxviii) <i>Evaluation Procedure and Acceptance Criteria for PWR Reactor Vessel Head Penetration Nozzles.</i></p> <p>When performing flaw growth calculations in accordance with non-mandatory Appendix O of Section XI of the ASME Code, as permitted by IWB-3660, the licensee shall use exponent -2.2 as the exponent in the SR equation in Subarticle O-3220.</p>	
<p>8. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Add 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)(D) – Regarding a new provision that will require augmented inspection of PWR reactor vessel heads using Code Case N-729-1 with cited conditions.</p> <p>Background for this modification is reprinted below and is in the FRN on page 16734 along with the proposed amendment and conditions on pages 16740 and 16741.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)(D)—Augmented Inspection of PWR Reactor Vessel Heads.</p> <p>Paragraph 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)(D) of the proposed rule would be added to require licensees to comply with the reactor vessel head inspection requirements of ASME Code Case N-729-1, subject to conditions.</p>	<p>◆ ASME does not support this amendment to the regulation endorsing and requiring the use of Code Case N-729-1 because of concerns with the cited conditions.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>On August 19, 2002, ASME received a letter from the NRC, which requested ASME develop a Code Case that would be used to provide inspection requirements for reactor vessel CRDM head penetrations at PWR plants. The appropriate ASME Section XI committees took the responsibility with a special task group to develop this Code Case, which became Code Case N-729 and ASME approved it on June 28, 2005. Shortly after this approval it was confirmed that a publication error had occurred and that a Code Case revision was needed to correct this error. ASME processed and approved the revision as Code Case N-729-1 on October 4, 2006. ASME developed this Code Case</p>

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<p>Compliance to Code Case N-729-1 with conditions would be equivalent to complying with NRC Order EA-03-009, dated February 11, 2003, and First Revised Order EA-03-009, dated February 20, 2004. Footnote 10 to 10 CFR 50.55a would be removed because Code Case N-729-1, as conditioned, would replace the requirements of the NRC Order EA-03-009 cited in that footnote. <i>That footnote states:</i></p> <p><i>Supplemental inservice inspection requirements for reactor vessel pressure heads have been imposed by Order EA-03-09 issued to licensees of pressurized water reactors. The NRC expects to develop revised supplemental inspection requirements, based in part upon a review of the initial implementation of the order, and will determine the need for incorporating the revised inspection requirements into 10 CFR 50.55a by rulemaking.</i></p> <p>Conditions are imposed on Code Case N-729-1 regarding inspection frequency, examination coverage, qualification of ultrasonic examination, and reinspection intervals. These conditions are being imposed to make the requirements in N-729-1 equivalent to those of the Order.</p> <p><u>Backfit Rule Analysis Discussion</u></p> <p>FRN page 16739 - 8. Add Paragraph (D) to 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)—<i>Augmented Inspection of PWR Reactor Vessel Heads</i></p> <p>The requirements in paragraph D, which impose ASME Code Case N-729-1 with conditions, were already imposed on existing licensees under NRC First Revised Order EA-03-009. Therefore, this requirement is not considered a backfit under 10 CFR 50.109(a)(1).</p>	<p>on its own merits with extensive technical help from its volunteers and their supporting organizations including NRC staff, but no one expected this Code Case had to mirror the requirements of NRC Order EA-03-009.</p> <p>Each of the proposed conditions to this amendment are addressed separately as follows:</p> <p><i>[(D)(2) Frequency of examination of Item No. B4.40]</i></p> <p>The industry has performed a comprehensive review of the available plant experience and laboratory data on the performance of the replacement head materials (Alloy 690 and its associated weld metals, Alloy 52 and 152). This study was submitted to the NRC staff. The plant and laboratory data strongly support treating the replacement materials as being significantly more resistant to PWSCC than the original materials of Alloys 600, 82, and 182. In addition to the studies that have been performed, it must be remembered that the resistant material will be on replacement heads.</p> <p>Both the laboratory testing and plant experience strongly support the reinspection frequency of 10 calendar years for replacement heads having nozzles fabricated from Alloy 690 material and attached to the head with Alloy 52 or 152 welds. The study shows on the basis of both the laboratory test data and plant experience, that Alloy 690 base metal and Alloy 52/152 weld metals are much more resistant to PWSCC initiation than the original head materials of mill-annealed Alloy 600 base metal and Alloy 82/182 weld metals. Such replacement heads are considered to be resistant to PWSCC in implementation of the Code Case.</p>

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Proposed Amendment Provision	Comments
<p><u>Proposed 10 CFR 50.55a Amendment And Conditions</u></p> <p>(D) <i>Reactor Vessel Head Inspections.</i></p> <p>(1) All licensees of pressurized water reactors shall augment their inservice inspection program by implementing ASME Code Case N-729-1 subject to the conditions specified in paragraphs (g)(6)(ii)(D)(2) through (6) of this section.</p> <p>(2) Item B4.40 of Table 1 must be inspected at least every fourth refueling outage or at least every seven calendar years, whichever occurs first, after the first ten-year inspection interval.</p> <p>(3) Instead of fulfilling the specified 'examination method' requirements for volumetric and surface examinations of Note 6 in Table 1, the licensee shall perform a volumetric or surface examination or both of essentially 100 percent of the required volume or equivalent surfaces of the nozzle tube, as identified by Fig. 2 of ASME Code Case N-729-1. A surface examination must be performed on all J-groove welds. If a surface examination is substituted for a volumetric examination on a portion of a penetration nozzle that is below the toe of the J-groove weld (Point E on Fig. 2 of ASME Code Case N-729-1), the surface examination must be of the inside and outside wetted surfaces of the penetration nozzle not examined volumetrically.</p> <p>(4) Ultrasonic examinations must be performed using personnel, procedures and equipment that have been qualified by blind demonstration on representative mockups using a methodology that meets the conditions specified in paragraphs (g)(6)(ii)(D)(4)(i) through (iv) of this section instead of using a methodology that satisfies the conditions specified by the qualification requirements of Paragraph-</p>	<p>Alloy 690/52/152 materials have been in service some 18 years with no reported indications of PWSCC in any components, including Alloy 690 steam generator tubes, Alloy 690 replacement nozzles, and Alloy 52/152 welds. The cumulative number of effective full power years (EFPYs) of service for the U.S. population of Alloy 690 steam generator tubes is estimated to be about 2.1 million tube-EFPYs, corresponding to about 3.3 million tube-effective degradation years (EDYs) given a temperature normalization from the steam generator hot leg temperatures to 600°F. The overall number of tube-EDYs is estimated to be greater than 10 million, including the worldwide experience. The material and stress condition is acknowledged to be different for the thin-walled application of steam generator tubes compared to thick-walled reactor vessel upper head penetrations. However, historically, cracking in steam generator tubing has been observed to lead by a large time factor the stress corrosion cracking observed in reactor vessel upper head penetrations because the stress and environmental conditions are generally more aggressive for steam generator tubes.</p> <p>Over 1000 other Alloy 690/52/152 component items including pressurizer heater sleeves, instrument nozzles, and CRDM nozzles are currently in service in the U.S., with some components in service for nearly 15 calendar years. The cumulative number of EFPYs of service for this population is estimated to be about 2800 part-EFPYs, corresponding to about 7600 part-EDYs given a temperature normalization to 600°F. It is significant that this experience with thick-walled Alloy 690 and with Alloy 52/152 includes about 222 replacement components now in service operating at pressurizer temperatures for up to almost 15 years. This includes about 120 heater sleeves at one CE-design station. Based on a typical activation energy for crack initiation in Alloy 600 of 50 kcal/mole, this 15 years of experience is equivalent to more than 50 years experience at the highest reported temperatures for</p>

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<p>2500 of ASME Code Case N-729-1.</p> <p>(i) The diameters of pipes in the specimen set shall be within 1/2 in. (13 mm) of the nominal diameter of the qualification pipe size and a thickness tolerance of ± 25 percent of the nominal through-wall depth of the qualification pipe thickness. The specimen set must contain geometric and material indications that normally require discrimination from primary water stress corrosion cracking (PWSCC) flaws.</p> <p>(ii) The specimen set must have a minimum of ten (10) flaws that provide an acoustic response similar to that of PWSCC indications. All flaw depths in the specimen set must be greater than 10 percent of the nominal pipe wall thickness. A minimum number of 30 percent of the total flaws must be connected to the outside diameter and 30 percent of the total flaws must be connected to the inside diameter. Further, at least 30 percent of the total flaws must measure from a depth of 10 to 30 percent of the wall thickness and at least 30 percent of the total flaws must measure from a depth of 31 to 50 percent of the wall thickness and be connected to the inside or outside diameter, as applicable. At least 30 percent, but no more than 60 percent, of the flaws must be oriented axially.</p> <p>(iii) The procedures must identify the equipment and essential variable settings used to qualify the procedures. An essential variable is defined as any variable that affects the results of the examination. The procedure must be requalified when an essential variable is changed to fall outside the demonstration range. A procedure must be qualified using the equivalent of at least three test sets that are used to demonstrate personnel performance. Procedure qualification must require at least one successful personnel performance demonstration.</p>	<p>reactor vessel upper heads.</p> <p><i>[(D)(3) Alternative to fulfilling the specified examination method requirements for volumetric and surface examinations of Note 6 in Table 1.]</i></p> <p>The surface/volumetric and visual examination coverage requirements of the Code Case are appropriate to ensure safety and plant defense in depth, and also are consistent with the goal of reducing the utility and regulatory burden associated with submission and evaluation of relief requests. The surface/volumetric examination coverage requirements are consistent with the coverage assumptions of the probabilistic fracture mechanics model for evaluation of nozzle ejection. It is emphasized that the examination coverage requirements of the Code Case do not permit high stress regions to be excluded at the choice of the examiner. Instead, complete coverage of the examination zone is required unless impediments to full coverage are encountered. In that case, the unexamined volume can be no greater than 10% for a particular penetration, and no greater than 5% for the aggregated volume. The leakage and safety cases are consistent with these requirements due to the relatively large structural margins against nozzle ejection and significant head wastage.</p> <p>The visual leak detection examinations provide two principal elements of protection:</p> <p>First, the visual examination acts as a backup examination to the required periodic surface/volumetric examinations in protecting against the possibility of nozzle ejection due to circumferential cracking. The probabilistic fracture mechanics model for evaluating nozzle ejection considers only a modest benefit of visual examinations in triggering</p>

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<p>(iv) The test acceptance criteria for a personnel performance demonstration must meet the detection test acceptance criteria for personnel performance demonstration in Table VIII–S10–1 of Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10. Examination procedures, equipment, and personnel must be considered qualified for depth sizing only if the root mean square (RMS) error of the flaw depth measurements, as compared to the true flaw depths, does not exceed 1/32-inch (0.8 mm). Examination procedures, equipment, and personnel must be considered qualified for length sizing if the RMS error of the flaw length measurements, as compared to the true flaw lengths, does not exceed 1/16-inch (1.6 mm).</p> <p>(5) If flaws attributed to PWSCC have been identified, whether acceptable or not for continued service under Paragraphs -3130 or -3140 of ASME Code Case N–729–1, the reinspection interval must be each refueling outage instead of the reinspection intervals required by Table 1, Note (8) of ASME Code Case N–729–1.</p> <p>(6) Appendix I of ASME Code Case N–729–1 must not be implemented without prior NRC approval.</p>	<p>detection of circumferential nozzle flaws as this model assumes only a 60% probability of detection for leaking penetrations. Therefore, the visual coverage requirements are well within the parameters of the main nozzle ejection evaluation.</p> <p>Second, the visual examination provides protection against significant boric acid wastage of the low alloy steel head material. Plant experience with over 50 leaking CRDM nozzles documented and wastage modeling documented show that significant amounts of wastage will very likely be preceded by relatively large amounts of boric acid deposits on the head upper surface. In practice, no more than five nozzles are expected to be adjacent to obstructions to 360° coverage for all nozzles. Thus, the expected maximum unexamined portion of the total set of nozzle-head intersections is only on the order of a fraction of 1%. Given the periodic surface/volumetric examinations that are also performed, there is an extremely low probability that significant wastage could occur given the visual leak detection examination requirements of the Code Case.</p> <p><i>[(D)(4) Ultrasonic Demonstration]</i></p> <p>Paragraph -2500 of the Code Case includes the following statement: “Volumetric and surface examinations shall be qualified in accordance with the low rigor requirements of Article 14 of Section V.” The Code Case does not specify additional NDE qualifications beyond this, but utilities are using techniques that have been demonstrated through the MRP protocol. The CRDM NDE Demonstration program meets the “low rigor” level of Section V Article 14 for UT exams. It has been completed with a technical basis and experiments documented. Several reports have been made to the NRC and ACRS reviewing this program. In addition, PNNL (on behalf of the NRC) has witnessed actual vendor</p>

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	<p>demonstrations. Furthermore, it is our understanding that the current industry available test specimens and flaw percentages required in (D)(4)(ii) do not meet these conditions and it will be sometime before such specimens would be available for use. Additionally, most procedures currently in use cannot meet the sizing criteria conditions of (D)(4)(iii) without being requalified and the requalification itself may not be possible anytime in the near future.</p> <p><i>[(D)(5) If flaws are attributed to PWSCC and are identified, the reinspection interval must be each refueling outage.]</i></p> <p>The Code Case includes paragraph -2420 which states that the successive examination requirement shall be prior to the end of the evaluation period used in the flaw evaluation. This flaw evaluation would include the crack growth rates for PWSCC and should be more often than the alternative provided (every period). This is an acceptable reinspection interval for any flaws that were accepted by evaluation.</p> <p>It is important to note that the acceptance standards specify if the surface examination detects linear indications of any size, or rounded indications if other relevant conditions indicate nozzle leakage exists on partial penetration welds shall be corrected by repair/replacement activities. Linear indications detected by surface examination shall be considered planar. Prior to evaluation, the depth of the linear indication shall be further characterized by volumetric examination. If a volumetric examination cannot be performed, the linear indication shall be assumed to be planar and through-wall.</p> <p>A visual examination that reveals relevant indications (defined as areas of corrosion, boric acid deposits, discoloration, and other evidence of nozzle leakage) shall meet three conditions:</p>

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	<p>1. Determination of the source of leakage and correction of the source of leakage.</p> <p>2. Evaluation to determine extent of degradation. Any degradation shall be evaluated for the effect on structural integrity and</p> <p>3. Relevant conditions indicative of possible nozzle leakage shall be unacceptable for continued service.</p> <p><i>[(D)(6) Use of Appendix 1 must be approved by the NRC prior to use.]</i></p> <p>The purpose of Appendix 1 of the Code Case is to clearly define acceptable alternatives in order to reduce the regulatory burden on utilities and the NRC staff associated with relief requests. It is not the place of the ASME Code to require utilities to get staff approval on acceptable alternatives.</p> <p><u>Comments And Suggestions For Consideration</u></p> <p>ASME recommends that the NRC reconsider its proposed conditions on the endorsement of this Code Case based on technical reasons stated above and not state that the conditions are solely being added to make Code Case N-729-1 match NRC Order EA-03-09.</p> <p>Although ASME does not support this amendment without reconsideration of the proposed conditions above, if the amendment is incorporated into the regulation, it is suggested that the following modification be added to the new 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(ii)(D)(2) condition. This modification will be needed for plants that are beyond their first inspection interval, because they will not be able to comply with the final rule without this modification.</p> <p>"For plants in their second or subsequent inspection intervals on <b>(NRC</b></p>

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	<p><i>to insert the effective date of this rule</i>), these examinations shall be completed no later than the end of the fourth refueling outage or seven years, whichever occurs first, following completion of examinations required by NRC Order EA-03-009, paragraph IV.C.(5)(b)."</p> <p>Additionally, if this amendment becomes part of the final rule with the proposed conditions being added by the NRC staff, implementation by the industry will need a substantial period of time before this rule becomes effective or it can't be met.</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>ASME suggests that the NRC remove the conditions associated with this amendment based on the technical merits of the comments presented above.</p>
<p>9. <u>Section XI</u></p> <p>■ Add 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii)(E) – Regarding a new provision that will require augmented inspection of Class 1 components fabricated with Alloy 600/82/182 materials by the endorsement of Code Case N-722 with cited conditions.</p> <p>Background for this modification is in the FRN on pages 16734 and 16735 along with the proposed amendment and cited conditions on page 16741.</p>	<p>● ASME fully supports this amendment to the regulation, which endorses and requires the use of Code Case N-722 with the conditions proposed.</p>
<p>10. <u>OM Code</u></p>	

LEGEND

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<p>■ Modify 10 CFR 50.55a(b)(3)(iv)(D) – Regarding Licensee requirements related to discontinuing check valve condition monitoring programs.</p> <p>Background for this modification is reprinted below and is in the FRN on page 16735 along with the proposed amendment on page 16740.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(D) would be revised to be less specific with regard to paragraph references in subsection ISTC [In-service testing, the Code for Operation and Maintenance of Nuclear Power Plants] to eliminate inconsistencies in paragraph numbering. This is considered to be an editorial change that does not affect the intent or implementation of the current modification regarding the discontinuance of Appendix II condition monitoring programs of check valves.</p> <p><u>Proposed 10 CFR 50.55a Amendment</u></p> <p>(D) The applicable provisions of subsection ISTC must be implemented if the Appendix II condition monitoring program is discontinued.</p>	<p>● ASME fully supports this amendment to modify the current limitation. Not referencing specific paragraphs in the regulation supports the intent of the 2004 Edition and earlier endorsed Editions of the OM Code regarding the Code requirement to implement the applicable provisions of subsection ISTC if a Licensee discontinues the Appendix II condition monitoring program.</p>

LEGEND

- NRC Proposed Amendment
- ASME Fully Supports This Amendment
- ◆ ASME Does Not Support This Amendment

**From:** Carol Gallagher  
**To:** SECY  
**Date:** Wed, Jun 13, 2007 10:01 AM  
**Subject:** Comment letter on Industry Codes and Standards Proposed Rule

Attached for docketing is a comment letter on the above noted proposed rule from Kenneth R. Balkey that I received via the rulemaking website on 6/13/07.

Carol

**Mail Envelope Properties** (466FF8CD.8EC : 5 : 35764)

**Subject:** Comment letter on Industry Codes and Standards Proposed Rule  
**Creation Date** Wed, Jun 13, 2007 10:01 AM  
**From:** Carol Gallagher  
**Created By:** CAG@nrc.gov

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MESSAGE	540	Wednesday, June 13, 2007 10:01 AM
1853-0006.pdf	196801	Wednesday, June 13, 2007 9:54 AM

**Options**

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**ReplyRequested:** No  
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