UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON REACTOR SAFEGUARDS
WASHINGTON, D C 20555

September 11, 1997

The Honorable Shirley Ann Jackson
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Chairman Jackson:

SUBJECT: REPORTING RELIABILITY AND AVAILABILITY INFORMATION FOR RISK-SIGNIFICANT SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

During the 444th meeting of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, September 3-5, 1997, we reviewed the voluntary approach proposed by the industry for reporting reliability and availability information for risk-significant systems and equipment to the NRC. Our Subcommittees on Probabilistic Risk Assessment, Plant Operations, and Fire Protection also met with representatives of the NRC staff and the industry to discuss this matter on August 29, 1997. We also had the benefit of the documents referenced.

We provided a report to the Commission on April 12, 1995, recommending publication of the proposed rule associated with this matter for public comment. In that report, we noted that high-quality, plant-specific reliability and availability information are needed if risk-based regulation is to fully reach its potential for both improving safety and reducing burdens on licensees. We also agreed with the staff position that availability and reliability data needed to support risk-based regulation should be publicly available. In a letter dated May 12, 1995, the EDO agreed with our comments and recommendations. It may also be noted that a publicly available database would help to make risk-informed decisions more understandable to the public.

The staff agrees that the voluntary approach proposed by the industry to provide reliability and availability information in a proprietary database is acceptable. The NRC has procedures for making proprietary data available to affected parties in specific cases. The proprietary database will preclude, or at least limit, independent exploration of reliability data for the evaluation of risk information. Data used by the NRC for generic assessments must also be publicly available. The staff proposes to alleviate the difficulties of the public availability of data by assembling a database that does not identify individual plants. We support

this proposal. We would like to review the utility of this publicly available database once there has been some experience with it.

ACRS Chairman Dr. Robert L. Seale did not participate in Committee's deliberations regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

R. L. Seale

R. L. Seale
Chairman

References:

1. Memorandum dated June 12, 1997, from John C. Hoyle, Secretary, NRC, to L. Joseph Callan, Executive Director for Operations, NRC, Subject: Staff Requirements - SECY-97-101, Proposed Rule, 10 CFR Section 50.76, "Reporting Reliability and Availability Information for Risk-Significant Systems and Equipment."
2. SECY-97-101, Memorandum dated May 7, 1997, from L. Joseph Callan, Executive Director for Operations, NRC, to the Commissioners, Subject: Proposed Rule, 10 CFR Section 50.76, "Reporting Reliability and Availability Information for Risk-Significant Systems and Equipment."
3. Report dated April 12, 1995, from T. S. Kress, Chairman, NRC, to Ivan Selin, Chairman, NRC, Subject: Proposed Rulemaking on Reporting Reliability and Availability Information for Risk-Significant Systems and Equipment.
4. Letter dated May 12, 1995, from James M. Taylor, Executive Director for Operations, NRC, to T. S. Kress, Chairman, ACRS, Subject: Proposed Rulemaking on Reporting Reliability and Availability Information for Risk-Significant Systems and Equipment.