

April 17, 1996

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

Dear Chairman Jackson:

SUBJECT: CONTINUED NEED FOR UNITED STATES MEMBERSHIP IN THE  
NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY

The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards has recently learned of the proposed withdrawal of the United States (U.S.) from participation in the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), a part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Department of Energy (DOE) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) are the primary U.S. technical participants in the NEA activities and, hence, are the agencies that have the most complete understanding of the benefits of membership in NEA. Our comments will perhaps assist you as you set forth the NRC position.

For many years, the NEA Committee on Safety of Nuclear Installations (CSNI) has been an active and productive leader in nuclear reactor safety research. CSNI reports cover the full scope of reactor safety concerns and are prepared by leading technical experts from the primary technical research laboratories and agencies of the member countries.

Current CSNI efforts contribute to U.S. programs in extended burnup reactor fuels, high-pressure melt ejection, direct containment heating, accident management, and steam explosions. Clearly, the CSNI has demonstrated the ability to keep pace with real concerns in nuclear safety. Furthermore, these efforts have resulted in substantial savings in U.S. research costs.

Nuclear safety is truly an international concern. The NEA is a forum for the consideration of common technical safety issues by the responsible regulatory agencies in the member countries and has been useful in developing consistent "western" positions. If the NEA did not exist, we would soon be convinced that it should be invented.

We believe that the suggested U.S. withdrawal from the NEA is shortsighted. We fully support your efforts to ensure continued U.S. participation in the NEA.

Sincerely,

/S/

T. S. Kress  
Chairman

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