

D870610

The Honorable Lando W. Zech, Jr.  
Chairman  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Zech:

SUBJECT: PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON QUALITY IN DESIGN  
AND CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

We believe that the present hiatus in licensing actions and the near completion of construction of the present generation of nuclear power plants provides an excellent opportunity for the NRC to reexamine the question of how best to achieve quality in design, manufacture, and construction.

Because of the great reliance placed by the NRC Staff on extensive and expensive formal quality assurance (QA) programs, it is important that we attempt to determine whether these QA programs deserve credit for actually achieving quality in the constructed plant. It now is assumed that programmatic or implementation deficiencies in the QA program are indicative of corresponding deficiencies in the quality of the plant. Conversely, it is assumed that if there are no deficiencies found in the QA program, the plant quality will be very high. Unfortunately, we have been unable to determine that either of these assumptions is valid.

Because other countries with substantial nuclear power programs seem to have achieved levels of quality even higher than we have in the United States, and because most of those countries do not require or utilize the kind of quality assurance programs that we do, it would be informative to review and discuss with them their philosophies, procedures, and practices to achieve quality in their plants.

We recommend, therefore, that you consider the organization and sponsorship of an International Workshop on Quality in Design and Construction. We would be happy to provide further thoughts on the agenda for such a workshop and would be willing to participate in the planning to the extent that our resources permit.

Sincerely,

William Kerr  
Chairman

