

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555



JAN 29 1980

Dr. Milton S. Plesset, Chairman
Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Dr. Plesset:

SUBJECT: SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION PROGRAM

This is in response to Dr. Carbon's letter dated October 11, 1979, to Chairman Hendrie (Enclosure) in which he made several observations about the staff's Systematic Evaluation Program for reviewing certain of the older operating reactors. In that letter he indicated the ACRS belief that the staff should reconsider the structure of the program since the pace of the review had been proceeding too slowly.

The staff has been concerned about the progress of this important program for some time. It believes that a number of the problems regarding the progress have been overcome in recent months with the dedication of additional staff to the program, including additional contractor resources at the National laboratories. Although the reviews in a number of areas have been recently progressing better (particularly seismic, electrical, site hazards and safe shutdown issues), we are exploring various approaches for further expediting and improving the SEP reviews.

In recent correspondence to Congressman Udall, the Commission indicated that the NRC plans to undertake a comprehensive program for systematically reevaluating the safety of all currently operating plants. Development of this improved program is the objective of Task IV.D.5 of the draft TMI action plans (NUREG-0660). Assuming Commission approval of the Task, the staff intends to develop an improved SEP that will cover not only the eleven plants currently under review, but all operating plants. Among the improvements under consideration for the revised program will be to place much more of the burden of demonstrating plant safety on the licensees.

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In summary, we plan to carefully examine all reasonable alternatives, including those suggested by the ACRS, for implementing an improved plan to reevaluate all operating plants. The staff intends to assure that this approach is one that addresses the various concerns identified by the TMI investigation, the ACRS and Congress. As the options are further developed, the staff will discuss the various approaches with the Commission and with your Committee.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation