



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

December 17, 1979

The Honorable John F. Ahearne
Chairman
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Dr. Ahearne:

The experience at Three Mile Island, Unit 2, was a dramatic reminder that improvements in the nuclear regulatory process are needed, even though the existing process has been quite effective in protecting the health and safety of the public and provides a solid base for the needed improvements. The experience of 25 years of nuclear power production stands as evidence of that protection.

In this context, and while continuing its review of the TMI-2 accident implications, the ACRS has been reexamining the regulatory process, and submits herewith the results of its study. We had two objectives. First, we wanted to provide our understanding of how the system has functioned up to now. The many investigations of TMI have revealed considerable confusion about the structure of this complex and interactive process, and we have tried to describe it and its genealogy. Second, we wished to point out weaknesses, as we see them, and to make appropriate recommendations for change. We have found this exercise instructive to ourselves and hope that it will be to others.

You will find that we have not separately listed our recommendations in an "executive summary," so a reading of the document is necessary. It is our view that recommendations for change should be contained in the description of the existing system to make them meaningful, but some of our more important recommendations appear in Chapter 8.

We are, of course, aware of the recommendations of the President's Commission, the President's response to those, and of the other reviews now in progress. We hope that this document will be generally useful, and submit it with that intent.

Sincerely,

Max W. Carbon
Chairman

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