



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

PDR

April 28, 1988

The Honorable Quentin N. Burdick, Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In my letter to you of April 15, 1987, I promised to provide the Committee on Environment and Public Works a copy of a revised nuclear safety research program plan. This commitment was made in response to observations made by the Committee in its report dated February 25, 1987, to the Senate Committee on the Budget. I am pleased to provide you the NRC's Five Year Plan for FY 1988-1992, which includes a program plan for nuclear safety research. We believe our Five Year Plan represents a significant improvement in previous agency planning documents in that it clearly sets forth the assumptions that underlie agency planning, the goals and objectives that the agency intends to achieve, program guidance that has been approved by senior agency management to guide the development of agency programs, and descriptions of the programs and resources that are planned to achieve agency goals and objectives. I should point out, however, that the resource estimates for FY 1990-1992 comprise planning estimates by the NRC which have not been reviewed and approved by OMB. These requests will be developed in full recognition of our need to maintain the safety of operating nuclear power plants while at the same time reducing expenditures in support of deficit reduction measures being taken by the President and the Congress. The milestones set forth in the Plan will be modified each year as appropriate.

In addition to improvements in our planning process, the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research is implementing many of the recommendations made by the National Research Council in their 1986 report, "Revitalizing Nuclear Safety Research". A copy of that report was provided to your Committee last April. Enclosed is a copy of the Commission's response to the National Research Council's report. A major accomplishment in this area was formation of an independent advisory committee reporting to the Director of the Nuclear Regulatory Research Office. This Committee, called the "Nuclear Safety Research Review Committee," will provide assessments and recommendations concerning the appropriateness of longer range research programs and the correctness of their direction, conformance of the program to the philosophy of nuclear safety research and to specific Commission

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directions, and the likelihood that the program meets the needs of the users of the research. Additionally, inter-office steering groups have been established to ensure that the needs of other NRC program offices have been appropriately factored into research planning and have been reflected in the Five Year Plan.

Other initiatives suggested in the report, such as establishing staff exchange programs with the national laboratories, fellowship programs, and increased sponsorship of research at universities, are still being evaluated by the staff. Their implementation will, however, depend on future resource availability.

I appreciate this opportunity to bring you up to date on our efforts to strengthen our research program. I hope that our Five Year Plan will provide a perspective on our programs that will be helpful to you and your Committee in reviewing our appropriation request for FY 1989.

Sincerely,

Lando W. Zech, Jr.
Lando W. Zech, Jr.

Enclosures:

1. NRC Five Year Plan for FY 1988-1992
2. Commission's Response to National Research Council Report

cc: The Honorable Robert T. Stafford