

**POLICY ISSUE**  
**NOTATION VOTE**

**RESPONSE SHEET**

**TO:** Annette Vietti-Cook, Secretary  
**FROM:** Chairman Hanson  
**SUBJECT:** SECY-21-0029: Rulemaking Plan on Relaxation of Inservice Testing and Inservice Inspection Program Update Frequencies Required in 10 CFR 50.55a

Approved  Disapproved  Abstain  Not Participating

COMMENTS: Below  Attached  None

**Entered in STARS**

Yes   
No

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Signature  
Christopher T. Hanson

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Date 08/25/2021

Chairman Hanson's Comments on SECY-21-0029, "Rulemaking Plan on Relaxation of Inservice Testing and Inservice Inspection Program Update Frequencies Required in 10 CFR 50.55a"

I appreciate the staff's efforts to streamline the agency's treatment of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Codes in 10 CFR 50.55a. In this paper, the staff seeks Commission approval of the rulemaking plan to double the time between updates for licensees' Codes of record for the inservice inspection (ISI) and inservice testing (IST) programs from a 120-month interval to a 240-month interval, with a potential future extension to a 288-month interval. The staff determined that once licensees update their Codes of record to the most recent edition and addenda of the ASME Codes by the effective date of the final rule, they can safely maintain their IST and ISI programs with an extended update interval. The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) concurred with the staff's proposal<sup>1</sup> citing the significant slowing of discovery of new degradation mechanisms in recent years. ACRS also indicated that "ASME Codes have matured to the point that major changes are no longer being published." I too support the staff's proposal.

First and foremost, I am convinced that this proposal does not affect the NRC's ability to maintain reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety. While appreciating the knowledge and experience accumulated over the decades of light water reactor operations, I must still recognize the potential for unforeseen technical issues to arise in the future. This may be particularly relevant as plants continue to age in extended operating periods and as new and novel light water reactors start operating in the future. However, I am entirely confident in the agency's capability to exercise its regulatory authority to effectively address emergent safety issues should they arise. In the past, we have successfully used our regulatory processes to address generic issues such as those related to primary water stress corrosion cracking and power operated valves. NRC maintains its ability to take necessary action to ensure public health and safety, irrespective of the update cycle.

Also, the current proposal retains the requirement to update the ISI and IST Codes of record, unlike the 2000 proposal<sup>2</sup> in which the staff recommended complete elimination of the update requirement. This ensures licensees' ISI and IST programs continue to improve over the long term.

Finally, in order to take advantage of the extension, licensees must update their Codes of record to the most recently incorporated edition of the ASME ISI and IST Codes. I see this approach potentially incentivizing licensees to adopt more current standards, thereby adding to safety. The staff's proposal is consistent with the agency's Principles of Good Regulation, and it would further risk-inform our regulatory framework.

For these reasons, I approve the staff's recommendation to initiate a rulemaking to revise the frequency of the ISI and IST program updates required in 10 CFR 50.55a from the current 120-month interval to a 240-month interval for licensees that update their IST and ISI programs to the most recent edition and addenda for the ASME Codes incorporated by reference in 10 CFR 50.55a by the effective date of the final rule. If ASME increases the ISI interval to 12 years, I approve initiating a future rulemaking to extend the interval from 240 months to 288 months. Finally, I approve the staff's plan to not develop a regulatory basis for these narrow scope

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<sup>1</sup> ACRS letter dated July 26, 2021 (ML21203A205)

<sup>2</sup> SECY-00-0011

Chairman Hanson's Comments on SECY-21-0029, "Rulemaking Plan on Relaxation of Inservice Testing and Inservice Inspection Program Update Frequencies Required in 10 CFR 50.55a"

rulemakings, to not engage the Committee to Review Generic Requirements, and to delegate signature authority for these actions to the Executive Director for Operations.