



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

January 17, 1984

Mr. William J. Dircks  
Executive Director for Operations  
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Dircks:

SUBJECT: LWR SAFETY APPROACHES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

In several recent ACRS reports on the NRC Safety Research Program (References 1, 2, and 3), the Committee has recommended that the NRC Staff become knowledgeable and remain up to date on regulatory approaches to LWR safety in foreign countries. It is our belief that it is important that the licensing staff, rather than just the research staff or its contractors, obtain the needed background and insight concerning foreign regulatory practices. We recommend that steps be taken to facilitate obtaining such knowledge.

The Regulatory Staff's level of activity in this regard has increased. For example, they have visited the United Kingdom to obtain a direct perspective on the bases for the differences in the English Sizewell B plant and a U.S. PWR. They have also discussed with the French the latter's approach to guidelines and measures for accidents beyond the design basis.

We believe that more effort of this sort is important and that there should be a well-established continuing activity of this nature. Two examples of other issues on which deeper technical insight could be valuable are the reasons for the current British approach to "leak before break" and the reasons for the differences between the detailed Japanese approach to seismic design and the trends in some segments of the U.S. nuclear community to employ flexible piping.

The ACRS believes it important to have a deep understanding of differences on such issues when they exist. This should lead to a more nearly optimal U.S. approach, one which is based on a broader technical background and perspective.

Sincerely,

Jesse C. Ebersole  
Chairman

References:

1. Letter from J. J. Ray, ACRC Chairman, to N. J. Palladino, Chairman, NRC, Subject: Comments on the NRC Safety Research Program Budget for Fiscal Years 1985 and 1986, dated June 16, 1983

2. Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, "Review and Evaluation of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Safety Research Program for Fiscal Years 1984 and 1985 - A Report to the Congress of the United States," USNRC Report NUREG-0963, dated February 1983
3. Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, "Comments on the NRC Safety Research Program Budget for Fiscal Years 1984 and 1985," USNRC Report NUREG-0875, dated July 1982