



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

September 16, 1981

Mr. Jerry D. Griffith, Acting Director
Office of Nuclear Power Systems
Office of Nuclear Energy
Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20545

SUBJECT: REPORT ON THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S RESPONSE
TO PUBLIC LAW 96-567

During its 257th meeting, September 10-12, 1981, the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards reviewed the first draft of the Department of Energy's (DOE) response to Public Law 96-567, the "Nuclear Safety Research, Development, and Demonstration Act of 1980." A meeting of ACRS Working Groups was held in Washington, D.C. on September 9, 1981 to consider this matter. During its review, the Committee had the benefit of discussions with a representative of DOE and the NRC Staff. Our general comments on the draft response to Congress appear below in the same order as in your letter.

I. Assessment of the Need for and Feasibility of Establishing a National Reactor Engineering Simulator Facility

We agree that a National Reactor Engineering Simulator facility, as described by DOE, is not needed. However, we do believe that a cohesive national light water reactor system simulation program should be undertaken. A principal goal should be the development of computational ability to study a wide range of transients and accident sequences, including the effects of human intervention and design variants. The increased knowledge of system and plant behavior which would be gained by such a program should result in improved safety through modifications both in design and improved operator training.

II. A Study of the Desirability and Feasibility of Creating a Federal Nuclear Operations Corps

So far as we can tell, DOE has not addressed all of the specific areas requiring assessment in Public Law 96-567.

The Law requires that a study be made as to the sufficiency of efforts in the U.S. to provide specially trained professionals to operate the controls of nuclear power plants and other facilities in the back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle. As part of this study DOE was to assess the desirability and feasibility of creating a Federal Corps of professionals to inspect and supervise the operation of these nuclear

September 16, 1981

facilities. This assessment was supposed to consider the establishment of an academy to train that professional Corps in all aspects of nuclear technology, nuclear operations, nuclear regulatory and related law, and health science. DOE has restricted its primary attention to the creation of a Federal Corps to operate such facilities.

While DOE has gathered considerable data on the numbers of professional people needed to man nuclear facilities, they have not directed sufficient attention to either the types of training needed by or the required aptitudes of the people involved. Although the DOE report addresses manpower requirements during normal operations, little information has been provided on manpower requirements during abnormal or emergency conditions.

Until such time as these matters are addressed, we do not believe that sufficient information is available to render a judgment on the desirability and feasibility of creating either a Federal Corps to inspect and supervise operations of nuclear facilities or an academy in which these professionals are to be trained.

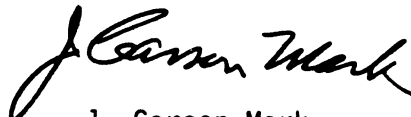
III. Program Management Plan for the Conduct of a Research, Development, and Demonstration Program for Improving the Safety of Nuclear Power Plants

The Program Management Plan described by DOE deals chiefly with program management and places emphasis on the coordination of efforts among the industry, NRC, DOE, other government bodies, and foreign programs. This is a desirable characteristic of any program.

The draft of the report available at this time includes some discussion in Appendix A of research programs in a few of the areas mentioned in Section 4(a) of Public Law 96-567. We are not prepared to comment on these incomplete and preliminary proposals, but would welcome the opportunity to comment further on the overall program or specific elements of it when the program is developed more fully.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



J. Carson Mark
Chairman