



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

July 19, 1979

Honorable Joseph M. Hendrie
Chairman
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

SUBJECT: RESEARCH REQUEST REQUIREMENTS

Dear Dr. Hendrie:

During the recent ACRS reviews of budgetary and technical aspects of the NRC program in safety research, questions have arisen concerning the proper balance between adequate responsiveness of the research program to regulatory needs and freedom for the research office to sponsor research programs on its own initiative.

The Committee believes it important that the research program should be responsive to the identified needs of licensing, both short- and long-term, but that it try also to anticipate possible future safety issues and look for unidentified issues of potential safety concern.

During the past two years, fairly stringent controls on the flexibility of the research program to explore long-range topics or to be responsive to meritorious unsolicited proposals have arisen from the requirement that each research program be requested by or endorsed by one of the NRC "user" offices or approved by the EDO. As stated above, the ACRS believes that the research program must be responsive to regulatory needs; however, the Committee believes that these procedures may have resulted in loss of the flexibility necessary to provide for an appropriate amount and kind of exploratory research. The ACRS recommends re-evaluation of the existing internal NRC procedures to assure that a proper balance exists.

The Committee believes that there is need for Nuclear Reactor Regulation and the other user offices to plan their research requests within some broad framework of overall NRC needs, so that too much emphasis is not given, inadvertently, to a particular area, and so that important areas are not neglected because they are not currently active licensing issues. There is also need for increased interaction, on the formulation and application of the NRC research program, between the "user" offices and the research staff.

Sincerely,

Max W. Carbon
Chairman