



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

June 8, 1978

The Honorable Morris K. Udall, Chairman
Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Udall:

The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) has considered the suggestion in your letter of January 27, 1978 for establishment of an independent, quasi-judicial board, patterned after the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), for accident analysis within the context of the current nuclear regulatory process. The Committee considered also the questions which you raised concerning the role of the ACRS vis-a-vis such a Board, should it be created.

Discussions with representatives of the NTSB's Bureau of Accident Investigation have indicated that, although the NTSB is responsible for investigating accidents in surface, air, and marine transportation, the criteria, procedures, and scope of the investigations vary depending on the specific mode of transportation involved. Air transport events, however, represent the bulk of NTSB work and range from minor incidents to serious accidents. It probably is the most well established area of NTSB's responsibility. In response to your inquiry the ACRS compared the nuclear power program requirements with air transportation investigation procedures.

While the NTSB reports on all aviation accidents, the bulk of the investigations, which are concerned with minor accidents or incidents, are delegated to the FAA, the involved regulatory agency. NTSB investigations are reserved for major accidents, generally involving fatalities. Analogous major accidents have not occurred in commercial nuclear power plant operation. Indeed, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the ACRS devote a significant effort to reviewing operational experiences, proposed changes in operating procedures, and plant design features intended to forestall such accidents and continuing discussion of this process with the NRC Staff is planned. For this reason, the ACRS believes that existing institutional arrangements are adequate for the range of incidents thus far experienced in nuclear power plant operation. Should there be

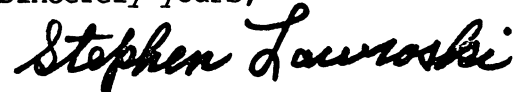
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an accident comparable in magnitude and significance to those now investigated by NTSB, it is within the mandate of the ACRS to conduct a comprehensive and independent investigation of it. Therefore, our opinion is that no need exists to establish an independent board to carry out this function.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen Lawroski". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Stephen Lawroski
Chairman