

5/16/00

MEMORANDUM TO: Chairman Meserve
Commissioner Dicus
Commissioner Diaz
Commissioner McGaffigan
Commissioner Merrifield

FROM: William D. Travers */RA/*
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: REVISED DUE DATES FOR TECHNICAL STUDY OF SPENT FUEL
POOL ACCIDENT RISK AT DECOMMISSIONING PLANTS
(CTM ITEM IV.G.2, WITS 199900132)

The staff met with the ACRS on April 5, 2000 to discuss the findings of the "Draft Final Technical Study of Spent Fuel Pool Accident Risk at Decommissioning Plants" which will be used as the technical basis for decommissioning rulemaking. In response to the meeting, the ACRS provided its recommendations and comments concerning the report in a letter to the Chairman dated April 13, 2000. The ACRS concluded in its letter that, "The risk posed by fuel uncover in spent fuel pools for decommissioning plants may indeed be low; however, the technical shortcomings of this study are significant and sufficient for us to recommend that rulemaking be put on hold until the inadequacies discussed herein are addressed by the staff."

The staff has reviewed the ACRS's comments and has assessed their impact on the finalization of the report and the staff's activities associated with decommissioning rulemaking. The ACRS's recommendations and comments affect the staff's report in four important areas: frequency of zirconium fires, acceptance criteria, timing of a zirconium fire, and the window of vulnerability for a zirconium fire. As discussed during the May 4, 2000, briefing with the Commissioner's TA's, each of the four areas had been discussed with the ACRS during the November 5, 1999, meeting, and the staff understood from the ACRS letter of November 12, 1999, that there was general agreement on the technical approach, and in particular, with the use of the large early release frequency guideline from RG 1.174. The staff continues in its belief that the principal findings of the report are valid and, that addressing the ACRS concerns can be completed in a timely manner such that the rulemaking schedule should not be affected.

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Addressing the issues will however require additional technical work related to consequence assessments and thermal hydraulic analysis, as well as text modifications to address uncertainties and to further clarify the staff's supporting basis. These efforts will necessitate a delay in issuance of the final report. The staff expects to address the ACRS comments and finalize the report by August 31, 2000. CTM IV.G.2 and WITS 199900132 due dates have been revised to reflect this new due date.

cc:
SECY
OGC
OCA
OPA
CFO
CIO

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cc: SECY, OGC, OCA, OPA, CFO, CIO

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* See previous concurrence

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