



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

REGION IV
PARKWAY CENTRAL PLAZA BUILDING
811 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 1000
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011

MAR 22 1985

✓ MEMORANDUM FOR: C. J. Heltemes, Jr., Director
Office for Analysis and Evaluation of Operational Data

FROM: Robert D. Martin, Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: STUDY OF THE NEED FOR AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY TO INVESTIGATE
INCIDENTS AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

This is in response to your February 15, 1985, memorandum requesting comments on the BNL report (NUREG/CR-4152) on this subject.

We are not persuaded by the BNL study that fundamental changes in the present NRC organization, organizational responsibilities, and organizational relationships are appropriate. While we are in agreement that many of the shortcomings can and should be remedied, and that organizational inefficiencies should be eliminated, these improvements should be handled by directed changes in practices rather than reorganizations. It is recognized that the improvements recommended and accepted are more than simply fine-tuning the present practices, but it is unwarranted to spring from a finding that the current practices are generally conducted in a proficient and technically competent manner into a recommendation that wholesale changes be implemented.

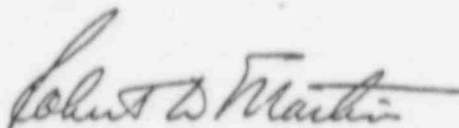
Some of the anticipated improvements appear to be unrealistic or without foundation. Anticipation that there will be an ability to "freeze" plant conditions appears unrealistic for most rational scenarios; anticipation of more accurate and timely identification of significant events also seems unjustified. We also are compelled to comment that the suggestion of a conflict of interest between NRC elements in seeking the truth is a "red herring"; if there are adversarial relationships between the NRC and utility personnel in seeking the truth, it is unlikely that another NRC element will do better.

We are convinced that some improvements in practices are warranted, and it may well be that the execution of such improvements should be primarily by AEOD. This should be by directive, not reorganization.

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In the decision in how to improve the NRC performance in this area, we suggest that a parallel between the NRC emergency response arrangements and this matter be considered. On both of these topics, a spectrum of events is to be considered, ranging from significant (but not urgent) events, up to very serious events requiring a mobilized response on the part of the NRC. We fully expect most events considered by the organization to be significant, but not of a magnitude which prompts NRC mobilization. This would indicate that improved organizational practices would be the cornerstone of improved NRC performance, as opposed to reorganization. It would also indicate that proper NRC response to urgent events of extremely significant magnitude would require resources beyond those available to the BNL-proposed organization. It is worth noting that the proposed reorganization would not relieve NRR, IE, or the regional offices of their responsibilities regarding significant events.

We recognize that there is a matter of perception regarding the establishment of a Commission-level organization called the Office of Nuclear Safety with the functions and responsibilities outlined in the BNL report, and that this may be seen in a positive manner by the public and by others. We are nevertheless persuaded that the driving force should be better achievement of results than the perception of results.



Robert D. Martin
Regional Administrator

cc:

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