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6/10/85

ACRS-2319

PDR 080585

DATE ISSUED: 6/7/85

ACRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES ON
THE STATE OF NUCLEAR POWER SAFETY
MAY 31, 1985
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Purpose

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the important long-term and short-term safety issues identified by ACRS Members in response to Dr. Kerr's memorandum, dated April 11, 1985, requesting that information. The content and philosophical nature of the Subcommittee report were also discussed.

Meeting Attendees:

ACRS

W. Kerr, Chairman

H. Lewis, Member

G. Reed, Member

A. Cappucci, Staff

Highlights, Agreements and Requests

1. Dr. Kerr asked the Subcommittee Members present to give their views on the criteria to be used in judging the state of nuclear power safety. The responses are presented below.

° Mr. Reed, based upon his recent trip to Europe, indicated that the health and safety of the Nuclear Power Industry in France and Germany are in better shape than in the U.S. He also suggested that there is less harassment of operations people by the regulatory bodies and that standardization has allowed them to deal with industry wide and common problems in a more coherent fashion than in the U.S.

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- ° Dr. Lewis stated that the activity of the Subcommittee should be devoted to making a statement on whether nuclear safety in the U.S. is in great shape, poor shape, needs improvement, etc. He suggested that issues should be addressed in terms of their relevance to safety rather than their amenability to the regulations. Dr. Lewis discussed the issue of flexible vs rigid supporting of piping for earthquake loads as an example. He also commented on the lack of a coherent regulatory philosophy within NRC and its suffering from bureaucratic slowness, ponderousness, and the inability to successfully close out an issue.
2. Dr. Kerr indicated that the six responses received from the full Committee did not demonstrate general agreement on any one or two specific concerns which needed to be resolved right away. He suggested that this was indicative of not one specific problem so outstanding that it was readily identifiable by everyone.
 3. Dr. Kerr summarized Subcommittee discussions as what might be said concerning the state of nuclear power safety from available input. He suggested that the Subcommittee could state that, "...we see no major crisis in the immediate future, but there are certain areas that we think deserve further consideration...", and then list them. Subcommittee Members discussed the difficulty associated with trying to define what issues should be included in the above statement because of minimal input from the Committee with no real agreement as to the seriousness of any one issue.
 4. The Subcommittee discussed items related to when the nuclear industry has reached a point where reactors are considered safe enough. This was described as an ideal point in time (obviously not reached yet) where a present level of safety would be maintained which might include assurance that maintenance is done

- well and reactor operations personnel are kept alert. This would also be a point where there would not be a national concern related to nuclear power. Dr. Kerr asked if the nuclear industry would ever reach that point. Mr. Reed suggested that the industry should push for that type of optimum but it would take a number of years to reach it. Dr. Lewis indicated that this type of question was related to society's acceptance of reactor risk. He suggested that the ACRS make a strong comment related to reactor safety which would elicit a societal reaction which could measure the willingness of society to accept risk from reactors.
5. In the Subcommittee's proposal to the full Committee, Dr. Kerr suggested that it include conclusions in Committee letters which cite the safety of individual reactors leading to concluding that U.S. reactors are appropriately safe. However, a group of cost effective plant improvements suggested by the Committee should also be included.
 6. The Subcommittee discussed including "financial risk to plant owners" along with conclusions concerning "undue risk to the public" as suggested by Mr. Reed. Mr. Reed pointed out that financial risk produces an indirect threat to safety because of a decrease in the ability of a utility to attract or hold appropriate personnel, or to perform needed functions.
 7. Dr. Lewis indicated that previous comments he had made concerning the NRC suggested that they do not direct their efforts in support of safety but consider its function of regulation almost independent of safety. He agreed with Dr. Kerr's characterization of his comments that the principal emphasis in the Subcommittee's report following the opening paragraph should include suggested changes in the way the NRC operates, including its philosophy. Dr. Lewis further explained that he believed the NRC does not operate in such

a way as to do the best job with its vast pool of skilled, experienced and educated people to assure reactor safety.

8. Dr. Kerr indicated that the report should reflect the thoughts of the ACRS. Therefore, it might not be necessary to invite outside speakers. Mr. Reed suggested that the Subcommittee could benefit from outside input. He further explained that good design input would come from NRC/ACRS, but concerns related to the restructuring of NRC should be addressed by outside organizations.
9. Following additional discussions related to the Subcommittee report Dr. Kerr proposed to draft a letter to be sent to the Committee Members which would include comments made by Subcommittee Members for full Committee review and comment.

NOTE: Additional meeting details can be obtained from a transcript of this meeting available in the NRC Public Document Room, 1717 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., or can be purchased from Ann Riley & Associates, Ltd., 1625 I Street, N.W., Suite 921, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 293-3950.