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Impact of Containment Building Leakage on LWR Accident Risk

O. W. Hermann
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IMPACT OF CONTAINMENT BUILDING LEAKAGE ON LWR ACCIDENT RISK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE	1
1.1. Containment Building Leakage Rates	1
1.2. Objective	1
1.2.1. Quantifying the Weighted Impact on LWR Accidents	1
1.2.2. Specified Method of Producing Objective	2
1.2.2.1. Generic Source Terms and "Accident Spectrum"	2
1.2.2.2. Applying Consequences in Guide for Siting Criteria	2
1.2.2.3. Additional Analyses with CRAC2 Code	2
1.2.2.4. Weighted Impact on LWR Accident Risk	2
1.2.3. Impact Based on Person-Dose or Latent Cancer Effect	2
1.2.4. Assessment Using Weighted Impact Fraction Rate	3
2. SOURCE TERM DATA AND PREVIOUS CONSEQUENCE RESULTS	3
3. METHODOLOGY	3
3.1. Base Case	5
3.2. Impact of Leakage Rates on Accident Risk	5
3.3. Evaluations of Comparative Consequences	7
3.3.1. Impact Fraction Rates of First Two Source Terms	7
3.3.2. Other Impact Fraction Rates from Previous Data	8
4. RESULTS	9
5. CONCLUSIONS	10
6. REFERENCES	13

ABSTRACT

The consequences, or risks, from light-water reactor accidents have been evaluated as a function of containment building leakage rates. The analysis used the set of generic source terms and frequencies of occurrence developed as representative of the range of postulated types of accidents currently applied in reactor safety research, and the calculated result was the variable M_{sp}, defined as the accident-spectrum-weighted impact fraction rate from containment building leakage. Explicitly, M_{sp} was formulated as the sum of fractional increases in consequences, due to the building leakage, for each type of accident weighted by its frequency of occurrence. The base case common to similar types of analyses was applied. The computed result was $M_{sp} \leqslant 1.5 \cdot 10^{-3}$ fractional increase in the accident spectrum risk per %/day containment building leakage rate.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

The containment building of a nuclear plant utilizing a light water reactor (LWR) serves as a final barrier to the release of radionuclides to the environment during an accident situation. It is recognized, however, that pathways for radionuclide leakage through the containment building always exist, even without a breach of the structure itself, and the importance of these leakage paths during an accident situation is of concern. In order to verify the integrity of the containment, a series of leak tests, ranging from individual component tests to integral containment tests can be performed. These tests are aimed at verifying that the containment leak rate is within the plant's technical specifications (expressed in terms of percent of containment volume per day). Clearly, changes in the technical specifications and/or modifications to the testing requirements or procedures will require that the impact of the leak rate on the consequences of postulated accidents be estimated. The objective of this study is to provide this information. The available data and methodology currently applied in assessments of nuclear reactor accident consequences were used as a basis for this evaluation.

1.1. Containment Building Leakage Rates

The main issue addressed here is the overall impact of variations in the containment building leakage rate on the risk from a postulated spectrum of types of hypothetical LWR accidents.

There are two main functions of the reactor containment building and associated safety systems:

1. To maintain shell integrity to avoid a release through a severe breach in the shell or a base mat meltthrough.
2. To establish appropriate isolation to limit radionuclide transport to the environment.

The second function is considered here. While it is obviously desirable to establish the complete isolation of a release into the containment building, on a practical basis there are sources of small leaks that are difficult to completely eliminate.

During normal operations of a nuclear reactor there can be transport of radionuclides, at least in minute quantities, into the containment building. Those nuclides either are trapped or become the small effluence from reactors. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine the effect of leakage rates upon assessments of normal operations.

1.2. Objective

1.2.1. Quantifying the Weighted Impact on LWR Accidents

The main purpose of this analysis is to quantitatively describe, as a function of containment building leakage rate, the weighted increase in the spectrum of consequences from

the set of postulated types of accidents that have been established for consideration in reactor safety research.

1.2.2. Specified Method of Producing Objective

It was specified that this analysis be as consistent as possible with the assumptions[1] and methodology[2] used in the most recent research on reactor safety.

1.2.2.1. Generic Source Terms and "Accident Spectrum"

Reactor safety research[3] has been sponsored by the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to produce a technical basis for estimating radionuclide behavior during hypothetical LWR accidents. These evaluations have led to the development[1] of five generic source terms to be associated with the five generic groups of reactor accidents, sometimes termed the "accident spectrum." Also associated with this accident spectrum are[1] representative frequencies of occurrence, together with parameters required in computing the consequences resulting from the corresponding source terms.

1.2.2.2. Applying Consequences in Guide for Siting Criteria

The evaluation of probable consequences of LWR accidents from the guide for reactor siting criteria[2] was used, when applicable, in this study. The same base case, as the "worst case," was applied.

1.2.2.3. Additional Analyses with CRAC2 Code

Consistency with recent research on reactor safety was maintained by using the CRAC2 code[4,5] for the additional calculations required, since it was applied in the siting criteria study. It is a modified version of the CRAC code, which was originally developed for use in the Reactor Safety Study (WASH-1400).[6]

1.2.2.4. Weighted Impact on LWR Accident Risk

The consequences of each type of accident group and source term were analyzed separately as a function of containment building leakage rate. Thus, the magnitude of the risk from each accident group can be compared on a relative basis with that of the base case.

1.2.3. Impact Based on Person-Dose or Latent Cancer Effect

Not all of the given source terms were severe enough to produce early fatalities or early injuries. Also, due to characteristics of CRAC2, it was necessary to compute a series of small puff releases to represent the effect of a continuous leakage rate. Then, consequences from small puffs were added to that attributable to the severe release (e.g., that from eventual containment failure). It would be incorrect to add early fatalities or early injuries from separate cases, because they are not proportional to total person-dose. However, person-dose values (man-rems) from separate cases are additive, provided that the

time history of the assumed evacuation scheme is properly maintained. The ratio of computed latent cancer fatalities to total person-dose is approximately a constant. Thus, the final impacts of leakage rates are based upon risk in terms of either total person-dose or mean latent cancer fatalities.

1.2.4. Assessment Using Weighted Impact Fraction Rate

The results of the study are summarized by a single value defined as the weighted impact fraction rate from containment building leakage rates. The effect of the frequencies of occurrence of accidents leading to the set of generic source terms is directly used in deriving the weighted impact fraction rate. Although there are significant uncertainties associated with both the consequences and frequencies of the postulated types of accidents, the weighted impact fraction rate provides a quantitative description of the realistic impact of containment building leakage rates on the risk resulting from the accident spectrum.

2. SOURCE TERM DATA AND PREVIOUS CONSEQUENCE RESULTS

The NRC generic source terms used in this study have been identified as SST1, SST2, SST2, SST4 and SST5. A brief description[2] of the accident spectrum associated with these source terms, reduced from the more detailed description,[1] is presented in Table 2.1. The fraction of the core inventory released for the set of seven groups of nuclides is shown, for each source term,[1,2] in Table 2.2. The postulated release times, containment building leakage rates, and the time periods that the containment pressure exceeds ambient[1] are listed in Table 2.3. Although the frequencies of occurrence for the generic source terms have large variations for specific reactor designs, representative frequencies of occurrence have been estimated[1] for use in safety studies. These representative frequencies of occurrence and the computed consequences of mean latent cancer fatalities,[2] relative to that of the base case, are shown in Table 2.4. The calculations were performed at Sandia National Laboratories with the CRAC2 code. The basic assumptions for the cases were: a standard 1120-MWe pressurized water reactor, New York City meteorology, the Indian Point wind rose and population, and an assumed evacuation scheme.

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of the analysis is to quantitatively determine the effects that containment building leakage rates have upon the consequences of the postulated accident spectrum. Thus, the method involves comparisons or ratios of consequences, which are consistently derived. When the required data have already been computed, previous evaluations are incorporated. Also, when making any required new assumptions, a definite effort was made to use conservative estimates.

Table 2.1. Brief Descriptions[a] Characterizing the Accident Groups Within the NRC "Accident Spectrum"

Accident Group	Description
1	Severe core damage. Essentially involves loss of all installed safety features. Severe direct breach of containment.
2	Severe core damage. Containment fails to isolate. Fission-product release mitigation systems (e.g., sprays, suppression pool, fan coolers) operate to reduce release.
3	Severe core damage. Containment fails by base mat meltthrough. All other release mitigation systems function as designed.
4	Modest core damage. Containment systems operate in a degraded mode.
5	Limited core damage. No failures of engineered safety features beyond those postulated by the various design basis accidents. The most severe accident in this group assumes that the containment functions as designed following a substantial core melt.

[a]Descriptions quoted from guide on siting criteria.

Table 2.2. Core Inventory Release Fractions of NRC Set of Generic Source Terms

No.	Nuclides/Source Term	SST1	SST2	SST3	SST4	SST5
1	Xe-Kr Group	1.	9×10^{-1}	6×10^{-3}	3×10^{-6}	3×10^{-7}
2	(not used)					
3	I Group	0.45	3×10^{-3}	2×10^{-4}	1×10^{-7}	1×10^{-8}
4	Cs-Rb Group	0.67	9×10^{-3}	1×10^{-5}	6×10^{-7}	6×10^{-8}
5	Te-Sb Group	0.64	3×10^{-2}	2×10^{-5}	1×10^{-9}	1×10^{-10}
6	Ba-Sr Group	0.07	1×10^{-3}	1×10^{-6}	1×10^{-11}	1×10^{-12}
7	Ru Group	0.05	2×10^{-3}	2×10^{-6}	0	0
8	La Group	0.009	3×10^{-4}	1×10^{-6}	0	0

Table 2.3. Release Times and Containment Leakage Durations

Source Term	Shell Failure	Release Time, hours	Leakage Rate	Leakage Duration, hours
SST1	Yes	1.5	-	1.5
SST2	Yes	3.0	-	3.0
SST3	Yes	10.0	1.0 %/day	10.0
SST4	No	0.5	1.0 %/day	0.5
SST5	No	0.5	0.1 %/day	0.5

Table 2.4. Accident Frequencies of Occurrence and Consequences

Accident Group	Source Term	Frequencies of Occurrence, ϕ (per reactor year)	Relative Consequence (Basis: Mean Latent Cancer Fatalities)
1	SST1	1×10^{-5}	1
2	SST2	2×10^{-5}	7×10^{-2}
3	SST3		2×10^{-4}
4	SST4	1×10^{-4} sum	4×10^{-6}
5	SST5		4×10^{-7}

3.1. Base Case

Essentially the same base case applied in the guide for reactor siting criteria[2] was used in this analysis. The total weighted consequence of the assumed accident spectrum is the sum of the products of consequence and corresponding probability of occurrence for each of the generic source terms. However, the total weighted consequence is not significantly higher than the weighted consequence of the SST1 source term of the base case. Thus, the conservative comparison, or ratio, of each computed source term consequence to that of the base case was applied.

A requirement of CRAC2 is that consequences in terms of person-dose may be computed for only a single evacuation scheme. All cases in this analysis used the second of the three evacuation schemes applied in the summary evacuation in the guide on siting criteria. Its parameters were in the intermediate range of the the three schemes.

3.2. Impact of Leakage Rates on Accident Risk

A direct evaluation of the impact of containment building leakage rates is described in this section. The method directly compares the risk attributed to "containment building leakage rates" for a given source term with the risk computed for the "base case." The meaning, used here, for the term "risk" is "the product of the consequence of a type of reactor accident and its frequency of occurrence." It should be noted that, due to the multiplicity of various accident scenarios and attendant source terms, some means of "weighting" the various accident scenarios must be employed to combine the individual results into an overall "risk" measure. Clearly, the most logical set of weighting factors, consistent with the usual interpretation of risk, is the estimated frequency of occurrence of the accident scenarios. Also, "consequence" is quantitatively defined as the total man-rems or mean latent cancer fatalities computed for the source term derived for a type of accident.

If f represents the fractional consequence of a given type of accident, and c and C equal the consequence of the given accident and that of the base case, respectively:

$$f = c / C \quad . \tag{1}$$

Consider the containment building leakage rate to be L %/day. Then, in general, the variable source term $S(L)$ produces $c(L)$ and the increased consequence is $c(L) - c(0)$. If $g(L)$ represents the fractional increase in consequence due to L,

$$g(L) = \frac{c(L) - c(0)}{C} \quad . \tag{2}$$

Now, consider the effect of generalizing the NRC generic source terms (in section 1.2.2) to explicitly account for variations in L. Note that the SST3, SST4 and SST5 source terms already contain a specified L from the conditions assumed in the associated types of accidents. Therefore, in these three cases, $S(L) - S(0)$, $c(L) - c(0)$ and $g(L)$ are proportional to L. Also, cases computed to simulate $c(L)$ for the SST1 source term proved that $g(L)$ was proportional to L. Thus, defining R as the fractional increased consequence rate per % containment building leakage rate,

$$\frac{dg(L)}{dL} = R = \text{constant} \quad , \tag{3}$$

or, with $L = 1$, R becomes,

$$R = \frac{c(1) - c(0)}{C} \quad . \tag{4}$$

Now, represent the frequency of occurrence of a given type of accident by ϕ, with ϕ_1 denoting that of the base case. Then, the weighted impact fraction rate of the given accident, M, may be described by

$$M = R\phi/\phi_1 \quad , \tag{5}$$

where M is produced in units of impact fraction per % containment building leakage rate.

The NRC generic source terms were derived from consideration first of irradiated fuel released to the containment building and, then, of the radionuclides transported by different means out of the building. Thus, a single impact fraction rate M would represent both SST4 and SST5, which pertain to different containment building leakage rates for the same fuel release category.

Equation (5) can be used for any source term. Thus, it may be applied to the complete NRC generic accident spectrum:

$$M_{sp} = \sum_{i=1}^{4} R_i\phi_i/\phi_1 \quad , \tag{6}$$

where,

M_{sp} = weighted impact fraction rate of accident spectrum,
R_i = fractional increased consequence rate of source term i,
ϕ_i = frequency of occurrence of accident type i.

Data representing ϕ_i have been established, as listed in Table 2.4. Where R_i data for source terms $S_i(L)$ are not already available, methods of computing $c_i(1)$ and $c_i(0)$ are given in the next section.

In place of converting to a rate, the fractional increase in consequences $g(L)$ may be weighted directly to compute the weighted impact fraction of the accident spectrum, represented by $h_{sp}(L)$:

$$h_{sp}(L) = \sum_{i=1}^{4} g_i(L)\phi_i/\phi_1 \quad . \tag{7}$$

3.3. Evaluations of Comparative Consequences

The methods used in determining R_i, the fractional increased consequence rate for $S_i(L)$, are presented in the next two subsections.

3.3.1. Impact Fraction Rates of First Two Source Terms

The breach in the containment building, which produces the SST1 source term and $S_1(L)$, has an associated release time of 1.5 hours. The evaluation of R_1 requires computing the effect of leakage rates during the 1.5-hour period prior to the large release. The consequences were computed by CRAC2 for the fraction of the gaseous nuclides, assumed to be all nuclides in groups 1 and 3, in the SST1 source term that would be released during 0.5-hour intervals for various leakage rates. Three cases were run for release times of 10, 40 and 70 minutes. A fourth case, using the part of the SST1 source term that had leaked, was calculated for the breach at 1.5 hours. The timing of the breach was assumed not to be affected by the containment building leakage rate. All cases considered the warning time in the evacuation scheme to be 10 minutes, so that each value of c in terms of total man-rems for the first three cases could be added and that of the last case subtracted to produce $c_1(L)$ - $c_1(0)$. The same evacuation scheme was applied in the base case, in which C and $c_1(0)$ (since, $C = c_1(0)$) were computed. Then, applying the computed $c_1(L)$ - $c_1(0)$ and C, Eqs. (2) and (4) were used to evaluate $g_1(L)$ and R_1, respectively.

The fractional increased consequence rate R_2 for the generalized SST2 source term, $S_2(L)$, is certain to be no greater than twice that of $S_1(L)$, since its release time is 3 hours or twice that of SST1. Or,

$$R_2 \leq 2R_1 \quad . \tag{8}$$

The impact fraction rates for the first two source terms can be computed from Eq. (5), using the evaluations of R_1 and R_2 and the frequencies of occurrence in Table 2.4.

While nuclides in the particulate or liquid form could leak to a certain degree as aerosols, they were not included in the leakage part of the SST1 and SST2 source terms because: they were included in the SST3 source term, which has a much greater impact (due to a longer leakage time and a higher frequency); they would tend to plug leaks and probably reduce the consequences; and, it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the source terms for these types of nuclides.

3.3.2. Other Impact Fraction Rates from Previous Data

The $S_4(1)$ and SST4 source terms are identical, since the only radionuclide transport to the environment for the accident group is due to the 1 %/day leakage rate of the containment building. There is no $S_4(0)$ term in Eq. (4) in this case. Then, R_4 equals the relative consequence fraction that was previously[2] computed for SST4, as listed in Table 2.4.

The SST3 source term contains two parts: $S_3(1)$, that from a 1 %/day containment building leakage rate for a 10-hour period; and that resulting from meltthrough of the base mat. The breakdown into these two components was not explicitly listed in the reports[1,2,3,6,7,8] researched on the development of source terms. Since the impact fraction rate R_3 is very low, a conservative upper bound was computed for R_3 and M_3. In core melt type of accidents, 100% of the noble gases (Xe and Kr of nuclide group 1) are considered available for leakage from the reactor containment (as specified in section 8.1 of the report[3] on the technical bases for developing source terms). Using the 1 %/day leakage specified to be the rate at which the noble gases are leaked and the 10-hour period of leakage (as specified for SST3), the noble gas "group 1" fractional source $S_{3,1}(1)$ can be computed. Then, if R_3' is the total fractional consequence rate for the total SST3 source term and $SST3_1$ is the part of SST3 from only "group 1" nuclides, the upper bound of R_3 can be established:

$$R_3 \leq \frac{S_{3,1}(1)\ R_3'}{SST3_1} \quad . \tag{9}$$

Note that $SST3_1$ is given in Table 2.2 for the Xe-Kr group for SST3 and the computed R_3' is the relative consequence listed in Table 2.4. Also, from the above description of $S_{3,1}(1)$,

$$S_{3,1}(1) < (10\ h/24\ h)\ (1\ \%/100\ \%) \quad . \tag{10}$$

Thus, the upper bound of R_3 can be evaluated from Eq. (9).

There are several reasons why the use of Eqs. (9) and (10) are conservative:

1. Equation (9) produces the same fractional consequences for all nuclide groups as that of group 1.
2. During the 10 hours in which the containment building is above ambient, its pressure may be reduced from the value of the design pressure assumed in a 1 %/day specification.
3. Leaks would tend to plug, due to particulates in the aerosols, reducing the leakage time to less than the 10 hours.

There are good reasons, also, for using Eqs. (9) and (10) in the above method:

1. The representative frequencies of occurrence would tend to have uncertainties which would exceed the conservative error in R_3.
2. The final weighted impact fraction computed by this method is very small, even though it could be considered to be an upper limit.
3. These results can be easily modified, should more precise data become available.

4. RESULTS

The details of the methodology in deriving the results are presented in section 3, and the available data required in the analyses are given in Tables 2.1 - 2.4. The main objective of the results is the evaluation of M_{sp}, the weighted impact fraction rate of the postulated accident spectrum.

The consequence computed by CRAC2 for the base case (SST1 source term) was 9.99 x 10^7 man-rems. The increase in consequence $c_1(L)$ - $c_1(0)$, determined by generalizing SST1 to include L % containment building leakage rates, were computed from CRAC2 results as described in section 3.3.1. Both $c_1(L)$ - $c_1(0)$ and $g_1(L)$, the fractional increase in consequences, are listed as a function of L in Table 4.1. It is seen that $g_1(L)$ is directly proportional to L.

The results of computing the fractional increased consequence rate R_i and the weighted impact fraction rate M_i, following the method given in section 3, are tabulated in Table 4.2. Finally, using M_i and the frequencies of occurrence ϕ_i from Table 2.4, M_{sp} was evaluated as shown. Thus, the conservative calculation of the accident-spectrum-weighted impact fraction rate, for the reactor size, meteorology, wind rose and population of the base case, was 1.5 x 10^{-3} per %/day leakage from a containment building.

The accident-spectrum-weighted impact fraction $h_{sp}(L)$ (from Eq. (7)) was plotted as a function of L, as shown in Fig. 4.1. It should be noted that, although Fig. 4.1 is plotted on

Table 4.1. Increase in Worst Case Accident Consequences Caused by Containment Building Leakage Rates

Leakage Rate, L %/day	Increase in Consequences $c_1(L)-c_1(0)$, man-rems	Fractional Increase $g_1(L)$
0 (Base Case)	0.0	0.0
1	4.4×10^2	4.4×10^{-6}
10	4.4×10^3	4.4×10^{-5}
100	4.4×10^4	4.4×10^{-4}
1,000	4.4×10^5	4.4×10^{-3}
1,600 (all, in 1.5 hr)	7.0×10^5	7.0×10^{-3}

Table 4.2. Individual and Accident-Spectrum-Weighted Impact Fraction Rates

		(Units in fraction per %/day leakage)	
Accident Group or Type	Source Term	Fractional Increase in Consequence Rate	Weighted Impact Fraction Rate
1	$S_1(L)$	4.4×10^{-6}	4.4×10^{-6}
2	$S_2(L)$	8.8×10^{-6}	1.7×10^{-5}
3	$S_3(L)$	1.4×10^{-4}	1.4×10^{-3}
4	$S_4(L)$	4.0×10^{-6}	
Total Spectrum, M_{sp}			1.5×10^{-3}

a semilogarithmic scale, the risk (as measured by the weighted impact fraction) versus leak rate is essentially linear. However, due to the magnitude of slope (1.5×10^{-3} per % leak rate), the semilog scale was judged to present a more accurate conceptual representation. The sensitivity of the impact fraction to changes in the leak rate can best be illustrated by example. A factor of 10 change in the leak rate (from 0.1%/day to 1%/day) results in an impact fraction of 0.015. Thus the overall "risk" would increase to 1.015 relative to a base case value of 1.000 and the factor of 10 change in the leak rate would result in a 1.5% change in the relative risk.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The computed weighted impact fraction rate of 1.5×10^{-3} per %/day leakage is very small. Its main component is due to the containment leakage source term that is part of

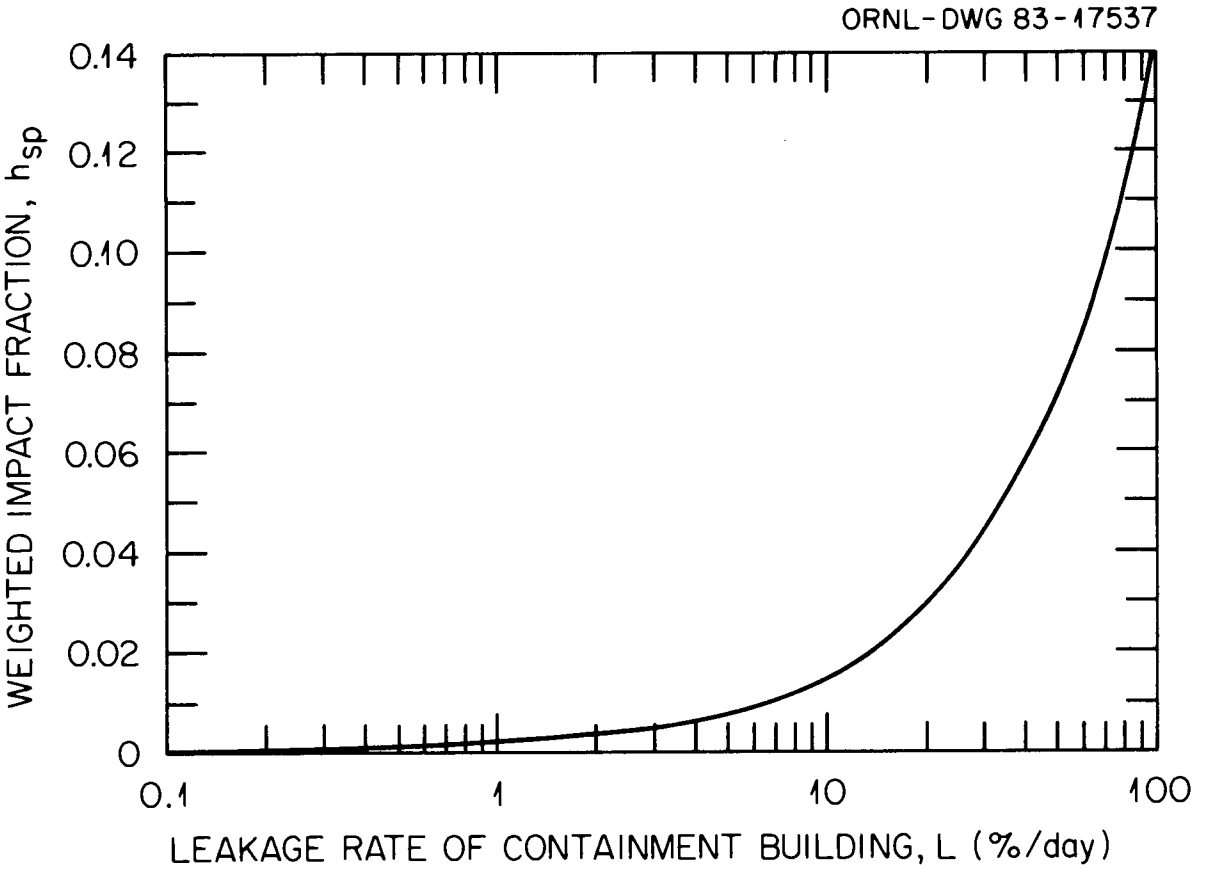

Fig. 4.1. Impact on Accident Spectrum Risk from Variation in Containment Building Leakage Rate.

the generalized SST3 source term. This source term was associated with the case which assumed a base mat meltthrough during a core melt type of accident. When the consequence from this leakage is weighted with its frequency, the computed risk is small compared with the risk of a severe release due to a breach in the containment building.

While the evaluation of the impact of leakage rates on LWR accident risks is indicated to be relatively small, the release during accident conditions is only one of the considerations relating to containment integrity. Among the other considerations are the effect of the leakage rate upon environmental assessments during normal reactor operations, as well as other potential pathways by which radionuclides may be transported through the containment (e.g., by certain types of coolant system ruptures). In fact, these other considerations may dictate a much tighter design requirement for containment integrity, as opposed to that based solely on the accident spectrum. It appears prudent to contain and trap, to a reasonable degree, even small quantities of radionuclides leaking into the containment during either routine operations or minor releases.

This study has shown that the LWR accident risk is relatively insensitive to the containment building leakage rate. Hence, if the impact on accident risk is the dominant consideration, the strict use of an absolute cut-off for the allowable containment building leakage rate may not be justified on a cost/benefit basis.

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The consequences, or risks, from light-water reactor accidents have been evaluated as a function of containment building leakage rates. The analysis used the set of generic source terms and frequencies of occurrence developed as representative of the range of postulated types of accidents currently applied in reactor safety research, and the calculated result was the variable M_{sp}, defined as the accident-spectrum-weighted impac fraction rate from containment building leakage. Explicitly, M_{sp} was formulated as the sum of fractional increases in consequences, due to the building leakage, for each type of accident weighted by its frequency of occurrence. The base case common to similar types of analyses was applied. The computed result was $M_{sp} \leq 1.5 \cdot 10^{-3}$ fractional increase in the accident spectrum risk per %/day containment building leakage rate.

17. KEY WORDS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

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