

Regulatory Initiative on Risk-Informed Prioritization

In February 2013, the Commission approved SRM COMGEA-12-0001/COMWDM-12-0002 – “Proposed Initiative to Improve Nuclear Safety and Regulatory Efficiency,” dated February 6, 2013 (ADAMS Accession No. ML13037A541) to further explore the idea of enhancing nuclear safety and regulatory efficiency by applying probabilistic risk assessment (PRA). This initiative could encourage the development of high-quality, plant-specific PRA models by allowing licensees to use PRA models to propose a schedule for implementing regulatory actions as an integrated set and in a way that reflects their risk significance on a plant-specific basis.

An interoffice working group was formed to explore this initiative (known as the Risk Prioritization Initiative (RPI) and to develop a notation vote paper, which will propose approaches for such a risk-informed prioritization process. The RPI working group conducted kick-off meetings, and the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) began to develop a draft process for risk-informed prioritization of regulatory actions. This process includes steps for generic characterization, which would feed into the plant-specific prioritization. Recently, the working group has held several additional public meetings to explore and understand NEI’s draft guidance.

The RPI working group also attended tabletop meetings in early 2014, during which industry illustrated how the draft industry guidance for the RPI process could be implemented on a plant-specific basis. In addition, the staff participated in demonstration pilots of the process during early Summer/Fall 2014. These pilots demonstrated how the process could prioritize multiple regulatory actions at specific licensee facilities. The result of the demonstration pilots will be an example of how the process could consider these regulatory actions in the aggregate to recommend schedule changes on a plant-specific basis. The staff notes that the licensee could use existing processes (i.e., exemptions) to request schedule changes and the pilot activities did not result in any automatic schedule changes.

The RPI working group will include its observations from the demonstration pilots to inform the approaches outlined in the follow-on notation vote paper that will be delivered to the Commission in March 2015.