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NRC REQUESTS INFORMATION FROM ALL LICENSEES ON MAINTAINING PLANT DESIGN

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today issued letters requiring commercial nuclear power plants to submit comprehensive information on their programs for maintaining accurate and accessible design information on their plants.

NRC team inspections and reviews at a number of plants over the past several months have turned up discrepancies between the plant's original design and its actual configuration and operating procedures. There were instances where procedures, practices and drawings did not match the design and where the original design installation was incorrect, modifications did not reflect design or were based on incorrect assumptions.

In some instances, these deficiencies could adversely affect the operability of required safety systems. Because of the potential impact on public health and safety if safety systems do not respond when needed, the NRC requires each licensee to provide, under oath or affirmation:

Information documenting current practices for concluding that the plant is consistent with its design and processes for identification of problems and implementation of corrective actions. The program descriptions should also address how design requirements are applied to operating, maintenance and testing procedures; and the overall effectiveness of the current processes in concluding that the plant is consistent with its design.

In responding to this letter, licensees are asked to indicate whether they have undertaken any design review programs. If so, they must describe how these programs ensure that they have accurate information and are using it and that this information is being kept up to date. If not, they are asked to provide the rationale for not implementing such a program.

Responses from the licensees are required within 120 days from receipt of the letters.

The NRC intends to use this information from licensees to plan its sample inspections of design controls verifying compliance with the terms and conditions of licenses and agency regulations.

The NRC letters do not apply to the Millstone nuclear plants in Connecticut, since Northeast Utilities is under a confirmatory order to contract for a third-party, independent corrective action verification program for Millstone which will address essentially the same issues.

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