

November 1, 2000

The Honorable Sue W. Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Kelly:

I am responding to your letter of September 22, 2000, in which you sought further clarification about the agency's policy on requests for additional information (RAIs) in processing license amendments. You expressed concern about the language in Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) Office Letter No. 803 and the possibility that high-ranking staff in NRR have explicitly discouraged additional RAIs during staff meetings.

Requests for additional information serve the purpose of supplementing licensee submitted or available information, to ensure that the staff has all relevant information needed to make an informed, technically correct decision on a licensing action request.

Office Letter No. 803 establishes procedures for reviewing license amendments. Section 4.3, which is enclosed, discusses RAIs. Section 4.3.2 states that when an RAI is necessary, the staff should make every effort to limit itself to one round of RAIs per technical branch for an amendment application. This objective is intended to encourage the staff to prepare thoughtful and well focused inquiries to elicit specific and truly necessary information. The guidance states that the intent is not to limit the staff in obtaining the information it needs to do a technical review, but to ensure that the information requests are accomplished in an efficient manner. Occasionally in the past, multiple rounds of RAIs were required because of a misunderstanding of the written RAI questions. Section 4.3.6 states that if the licensee fails to respond fully to an RAI, the NRR project manager is to set up a meeting or conference call to discuss the deficiencies and what needs to be provided to the staff in order to complete the review. The staff has found that this policy has provided a more efficient means of communicating with licensees, and, in most cases, has found one round of RAIs to be sufficient.

NRR management will reemphasize the policy on RAIs to reiterate that, following an incomplete RAI response, the staff can obtain additional information through conference calls, meetings, and, if appropriate, additional RAIs.

I appreciate your concern about this matter. If you have additional questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: As stated