

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

November 5, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR: James M. Taylor
Executive Director for OPERations

FROM: Samuel J. Chilk, Secretary

SUBJECT: SECY-90-287 - DISTINGUISHED ENGINEERS AND
DISTINGUISHED SCIENTISTS

The Commission (with all Commissioners agreeing) has approved in concept and strongly supports the development of a program for appointing Distinguished Engineers and Distinguished Scientists. A majority of the Commission (Commissioners Rogers, Curtiss, and Remick agreeing) has approved the staff's recommendation in this SECY paper. Therefore, the staff should proceed to develop and issue an NRC Manual Chapter to implement a pay plan and procedures for appointing Distinguished Engineers and Scientists. Chairman Carr would have preferred to delay publishing the manual chapter until more information can be obtained.

(EDO) (SECY Suspense: 12/21/90)

The Commission believes that the following comments should be addressed before actually filling the first position under this proposal:

1. The staff should define what is meant by a "nationally recognized expert." Staff should consider whether any additional selection criteria should be used in connection with this program.
2. NRC efforts to attract and retain "Distinguished Scientists and Engineers" should be oriented to obtaining the skills and disciplines needed agency-wide over the next five to ten years rather than to fill short-term vacancies in individual offices and programs. The staff should discuss the manner in which this program will meet these long term goals. In that context, the staff should specify the disciplines that will be targeted for the initial group of five to be designated.

SECY NOTE: THIS SRM, SECY-90-287, AND THE VOTE SHEETS OF COMMISSIONERS ROGERS, CURTISS AND REMICK WILL BE MADE

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE 10 WORKING DAYS FROM THE DATE OF THIS SRM

-2-

521

3. To ensure uniform implementation of this program, the NRC senior management should recommend how Distinguished Engineers and Scientists will be utilized, how the projects they will work on will be determined, and the degree of freedom they should have to choose the projects they will work on. The program's attractiveness will depend on the NRC's ability to apply the specialized knowledge and experience of Distinguished Engineers and Scientists to challenging and important technical problems which cross organizational boundaries. Also, the ability to attract "world class" individuals may make it desirable for NRC first to confer the status of Distinguished Engineer or Distinguished Scientist on qualifying NRC employees to demonstrate the viability and success of this program. The staff should consider implementing the program on a trial basis in this manner.

(EDO) (SECY Suspense: 1/25/91)

Chairman Carr believes that to formally establish a pay plan and appointment procedures for a category of individuals whose definition, role, and relationship to agency future needs have not been established suggests an urgency not supported by SECY-90-287. Moreover, Chairman Carr expressed two additional reservations that go beyond the immediate scope of the staff's proposal:

1. It is not clear that this proposal, along with the new personnel initiatives described in SECY-90-275 and SECY-90-281, and other recruitment activities planned or underway represent elements of an overall agency plan to resolve anticipated resource needs over the long term. The staff's efforts to project anticipated vacancy areas to improve recruitment planning, as requested by Commissioner Rogers during a recent periodic briefing on EEO matters, have not been completed.

2. Individuals selected for this program will serve in line organizations, but have no supervisory authority nor will they serve in normal staff positions, such as technical or special assistant. It is difficult to envision how this arrangement will work in practice without crossing existing lines of authority or risking serious morale problems within the staff. If the intention is to limit the Distinguished Scientist or Engineer to a status equivalent to a senior

technical reviewer in order to obviate this problem, then these positions may not have sufficient substance to attract nationally-recognized experts. This limited type of function could be performed on a consultant basis.

-3-

522

cc: Chairman Carr
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Curtiss
Commissioner Remick
OGC
GPA