



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001**

July 9, 2001

MEMORANDUM TO: Richard Wessman, Director
Incident Response Operations

THRU: Nader Mamish, Chief *(/RA by N. L. Mamish)*
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SUBJECT: TRIP REPORT - FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF NEWS
(NUCLEAR EVENT WEB-BASED SYSTEM)

On June 7-8, 2001, I attended a meeting with the co-sponsors of the Nuclear Event Web-based System (NEWS) at the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) Headquarters in Paris, France. NEA was represented by Mr. B. Kaufer. Also in attendance were Messrs. T. Capp and V. Madden from the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) and Mr. D. Delattre from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Mr. Kaufer is expected to make a presentation on NEWS at the Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities (CNRA) conference next week.

The purpose of the meeting was to suggest improvements to the program's software, discuss how NEWS might best be employed, and to finalize the NEWS User's Guide. The co-sponsors also discussed options on how the system could be advertised and promoted. The meeting was successful and each participant voiced satisfaction with the results that were obtained. The following is a short discussion of the most important proposals that were adopted during the meeting. Some of these proposals address issues that were raised by NRC management during briefings over the past six months. For background information I have attached a short description of NEWS that was used to brief Commissioner Merrifield on May 30, 2001. This attachment does not reflect the changes discussed in this trip report.

Each International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) National Officer will have access to a list of level one (other INES Officers) and level two (nuclear facility) users along with their email addresses sorted by country. To obtain information on an event (or even a rumor) in another country one email can be sent to all the appropriate contacts. NEA, IAEA and WANO regional offices can also be addressed in the same email thus allowing INES National Officers to reach all the relevant participating organizations and people with just one communication.

The next software upgrade will allow each country's INES National Officer to grant access to new users. This distributes the administrative burden and allows for a faster response time

when a prospective user requests access. INES National Officers will be able to grant access at level two and below. Only the IAEA will be able to grant level one access.

Two additional access levels were agreed upon in addition to the three that already existed. Level one and two were mentioned above, level three grants read access to all portions of the system and write access to only the discussion forum. The new levels, four and five, are read only levels. Level four grants read access to all portions of the system. This level is intended for users that need access but aren't expected to contribute to the technical discussion. Level five is a special read-only level created to allow access to the INES Event Rating Forms and nothing else.

The co-sponsors will begin promoting the system in August 2001. A poster and demonstration will be presented during the IAEA's general conference in August. During that same week, WANO will advertise NEWS during their bi-annual meeting in Korea. A leaflet will be prepared jointly by NEA, IAEA and WANO to be used as an introduction to the NEWS User's Manual. Once finalized the User's Manual will be distributed to all INES National Officers.

There are a host of other minor software changes and modifications of the user's manual that will be made. The most important of which is the inclusion in the user's manual of some guidelines on its use and the main rules of operation. This meeting has resulted in a system which is much more well defined than the one which existed prior to the meeting. The steering committee will meet again early in 2002, prior to the INES National Officers meeting, to review progress and finalize a presentation to the INES National Officers biennial conference.

IRO staff intends to take the following actions.

1. Review the final version of the User's Manual and guidelines developed by IAEA/NEA/WANO and make an assessment on how the NRC and U.S. industry might best benefit.
2. Hold discussions with NEI to gauge industry's view on NEWS.
3. Coordinate with other NRC Offices to develop a staff consensus.
4. Prepare a Commission Paper and Staff recommendation - late 2001

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DOCUMENT NAME: G:\WeaverNEWSTripReport3a.wpd

IRO No.: #1 (6/27/01)

ACCESSION NO.: ML011910072

TEMPLATE NO.: IRO-002

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NEWS (Nuclear Event Web-based System) Status Report
(Summary updated on May 30, 2001, from Attachment 4 of SECY-01-071)

BACKGROUND:

There were two driving forces behind the development of Nuclear Event Web-based System (NEWS). The first was the success of the Y2K Early Warning System (YEWS) upon which NEWS is based. YEWS was widely used throughout the world during the Year 2000 rollover and the system received universal praise. Many participants suggested a similar system be developed for continued use. The second impetus is the growing interest in national nuclear regulatory bodies in events that take place beyond their own borders. Although the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has a well-developed Emergency Notification program based on the Early Notification and Assistance Conventions, the threshold for reporting these events is high and as a result the majority of events of interest are not required to be reported. There is also a timeliness issue; IAEA receives and distributes information on a time-delayed basis. Generally information is provided days after an event occurs, while the need for information is most urgent on the order of hours. NEWS is an attempt to meet this information demand.

DESCRIPTION:

NEWS is a voluntary, secure, Internet-based communications system that allows for rapid transmission of information among regulators, operators and technical support organizations. Access into NEWS consists of three levels. The first level is reserved for the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) national officers and is used to submit INES reports. (The web submittal will eventually replace the current facsimile.) Web-based INES was developed simultaneously with NEWS to minimize costs and to keep the database maintenance workload to a minimum. The second level is for nuclear facilities/utilities. This level provides write access for press releases and related documents. The lowest level, level three, is designed to encourage discussions of ongoing events in near real time by technical experts. Level three is a discussion forum where various discussion threads may be started and followed. The detailed guidance regarding authorization, access and use is still being developed by IAEA.

STATUS:

A prototype version of NEWS has been completed and is currently undergoing testing. This version can be accessed though the Internet with a current ID and password, and some countries have started to make routine posts to the site including France, Belgium and the Ukraine. NRC has participated by posting our INES ratings and posting some other test messages. Incident Response Operations will coordinate the issuance of identifications and passwords with IAEA and any NRC employee may obtain one (level 3 access). IAEA intends to keep NEWS in this test status until the end of 2001. Additional software improvements will be made as experience is gained with the system.

A NEWS user's guide is under development at IAEA along with suggested guidelines for its use. The user's guide will cover the details of operating the software. The staff will provide feedback to IAEA/NEA on the guidelines at a meeting scheduled for June 7-8, 2001. The World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) also supports this effort and will begin to market it to its members once the guidelines are near their final form.