

March 1, 2002

ALL AGREEMENT STATES
MINNESOTA, PENNSYLVANIA, WISCONSIN

PROGRAM INFORMATION: CHANGES TO NRC PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR EVENT SCALE (STP-02-018)

As we discussed during the February 28, 2001 OAS/NRC Teleconference, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was reconsidering its level of participation in the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES), developed jointly by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Commission has decided to increase its participation in the INES to "full participation." Full participation is defined as the evaluation of all reported nuclear events (reactor, fuel cycle, materials, and transportation events), including events which fall under the regulatory purview of the Agreement States, by the NRC staff for possible rating on the INES. Medical misadministrations are outside the scope of the INES and would not be reviewed by the staff for possible rating. Only events rated at level 2 or higher would be reported to the IAEA, unless another member country specifically requested the rating of a particular event. Events which do not meet these criteria would not be recorded nor reported.

The INES has been adopted by many countries throughout the world because it provides a consistent framework for communicating the significance of events involving nuclear facilities. The NRC has participated in the INES in a very limited manner since December 1992. Since that time, the scope and level of worldwide participation in the INES program has expanded, primarily as the result of efforts by the IAEA and the NEA. The INES is not intended to supercede the existing four-tiered emergency classification system described in NUREG-0654. INES classifies events at several levels. Events of greater safety significance (levels 4-7) are termed "accidents," events of lesser safety significance (levels 1-3) are termed "incidents," and events of no safety significance (level 0 or below scale) are termed "out-of-scale deviations." A description of the INES, including an explanation of the various levels can be found at: <http://www.iaea.org/worldatom/inforesource/factsheets/ines.html>.

The NRC expects that the changes in participation in the INES will have a minimal impact on Agreement States. Currently, Agreement States report significant events (24-hour reportable events) to the NRC Operations Center. These and other reportable events are entered into the Nuclear Materials Event Database (NMED). No other reporting would be necessary by Agreement States. NRC staff will evaluate each event reported by an Agreement State to the NMED and will make an initial determination of the appropriate INES classification of the event. For those events initially rated by NRC at level 2 or higher, NRC staff will then consult with the

affected Agreement State to solicit their input on the rating. Based upon a review of the NMED database, it is anticipated that very few Agreement State reported events would be rated using the INES because of the relatively low actual or potential consequences associated with these events.

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