

October 30, 2002

Mr. Ralph E. Beedle
Senior Vice President and
Chief Nuclear Officer,
Nuclear Generation
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

Dear Mr. Beedle:

I am responding on behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to your letter of August 22, 2002, in which you raised issues for Commission consideration as it reviews a proposed rule that would permit nuclear power reactor licensees to adopt voluntarily a set of alternative fire protection requirements. The alternate methods are described in the "Performance-Based Standard for Fire Protection for Light-Water Reactor Electric Generating Plants, 2001 Edition," which the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) promulgated as NFPA Standard 805.

The Commission has completed its review of the draft proposed rule, which will be published shortly for comment. The Commission considered, but did not adopt, NEI's request to amend the proposed rule to eliminate the requirement for a license amendment in order to use alternate methods and analytical approaches. Of course, this is a matter that can be addressed in comments on the proposed rule. I also note that the NRC staff plans to schedule a public meeting in the near future on the general subject of the appropriate use of license amendments to effect approvals of licensed activities and may provide a written response to your earlier letter on this subject following that meeting.

The Commission looks forward to a continuing dialogue with industry and other stakeholders regarding the risk-informing of the fire protection and other regulatory requirements.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve