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UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

May 16, 1986

IE INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 86-36: CHANGE IN NRC PRACTICE REGARDING ISSUANCE OF  
CONFIRMING LETTERS TO PRINCIPAL CONTRACTORS

Addressees:

All nuclear power reactor facilities holding an operating license (OL) or a construction permit (CP).

Purpose:

This notice is to inform recipients of a change in the NRC practice of issuing confirming letters to principal contractors regarding the continuing adequacy of their QA programs. This change, which is discussed in the Preface of the Licensee Contractor and Vendor Inspection Status Report, October 1985-December 1985, NUREG-0040, Vol. 9, No. 4 (White Book), affects licensee implementation of their QA programs in accordance with the requirements of Appendix B to 10 CFR 50 Criterion VII. It is expected that the recipients will review the information for applicability to their facilities and consider appropriate actions. However, the information contained in this notice does not constitute new NRC requirements; therefore, no specific action or written response is required.

Description of Circumstances:


When design and construction activities for new nuclear power plants were numerous, firms designing nuclear steam supply systems, architect engineering firms designing nuclear power plants, and certain major equipment vendors were inspected on a regular basis by the NRC. The purpose of these inspections was to ascertain through direct observation of QA activities whether these design firms and vendors were satisfactorily implementing their QA programs in accordance with topical reports previously reviewed and accepted by the NRC. When the NRC inspections had determined that the QA programs were being satisfactorily implemented, the NRC issued confirming letters to the principal contractors. Those letters were issued every three years, provided that the QA programs continued to be satisfactorily implemented. The confirming letters could be used by licensees and applicants, at their option, to fulfill their obligation under 10 CFR 50, Appendix B, Criterion VII, that requires them to perform initial source evaluation audits and subsequent periodic audits to verify QA program implementation.

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However, with the substantial decline in new plant design activities, the NRC inspection of QA program implementation by principal contractors has been deemphasized. As discussed in the Preface of the "White Book," future NRC inspections will focus on selected areas instead of addressing the broad implementation of the QA programs. Therefore, the NRC will no longer issue confirming letters to principal contractors, and those letters that have already exceeded their 3-year period of effectivity will not be renewed. Confirming letters issued less than 3-years ago will remain in effect until the stated period expires.

With the expiration of confirming letters, licensees and applicants will no longer have the option to take credit for the NRC acceptance of the implementation of a principal contractor's QA program. In accordance with commitments to meet the provisions of Appendix B to 10 CFR 50, licensees and applicants will be responsible for the conduct of initial source evaluation audits and subsequent periodic audits to verify QA program implementation. The NRC will continue to review revisions to the QA programs of principal contractors as described in topical reports when submitted and, when approved, will issue approval letters. The latest approved topical report revision number and date of the approval letter will be published quarterly in the "White Book."

Since compliance with Criterion VII of Appendix B to 10 CFR 50 is already required, no new specific action or written response is required by this information notice. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Regional Administrator of the appropriate regional office or this office.

  
Edward L. Jordan, Director  
Division of Emergency Preparedness  
and Engineering Response  
Office of Inspection and Enforcement

Technical Contact: W. P. Haass, IE  
(301) 492-9041

Attachment: List of Recently Issued IE Information Notices

LIST OF RECENTLY ISSUED  
IE INFORMATION NOTICES

Information Notice No.	Subject	Date of Issue	Issued to
86-35	Fire In Compressible Material At Dresden Unit 3	5/15/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or CP
86-34	Improper Assembly, Material Selection, And Test Of Valves And Their Actuators	5/13/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or CP
86-33	Information For Licensee Regarding The Chernobyl Nuclear Plant Accident	5/6/86	Fuel cycle licensees and Priority 1 material licensees
86-32	Request For Collection Of Licensee Radioactivity Measurements Attributed To The Chernobyl Nuclear Plant Accident	5/2/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or CP
86-31	Unauthorized Transfer and Loss of Control of Industrial Nuclear Gauges	5/6/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or a CP
86-30	Design Limitations of Gaseous Effluent Monitoring Systems	4/29/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or a CP
86-29	Effects of Changing Valve Motor-Operator Switch Settings	4/25/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or a CP
86-28		4/28/86	
86-27	Access Control at Nuclear Facilities	4/21/86	All power reactor facilities holding an OL or CP, research and nonpower reactor facilities, and fuel fabrication & processing facilities

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OL = Operating License  
CP = Construction Permit