

October 31, 2003

Mr. Alan P. Nelson
Senior Project Manager
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR EVENT SCALE - GUIDANCE FOR FUEL
DAMAGE EVENTS

Dear Mr. Nelson:

By letters dated May 29, 2003, and July 3, 2003, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) provided recommendations to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff regarding the NRC's participation in the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES). A public meeting regarding your May 29, 2003, letter was held on June 25, 2003, and was attended by representatives of NEI, the NRC staff, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). NRC subsequently placed a summary of the public meeting in ADAMS (ML032020147) and also responded to your letters on July 24, 2003, (ADAMS No. ML032050620).

One area of concern raised by NEI in their letters and discussed during the June 25, 2003, public meeting was the INES rating guidance for fuel damage events. NEI expressed concern that, based on their perception of the language in the INES User's Manual, a user could overrate an event involving minor fuel cladding failure. NRC agreed to bring the matter forward to the INES Coordinator at the IAEA for further review by INES National Officers.

During the week of October 13, 2003, I attended a meeting of the Advisory Committee of the INES National Officers in Vienna, Austria. One of the topics of this meeting was to review applicable portions of the INES Manual and develop clarifying guidance for core damage events. The Advisory Committee prepared the attached guidance document, which will be provided to the INES National Officers in March 2004, for their approval for a trial period. It then may be considered for inclusion in a future revision to the INES User's Manual.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard H. Wessman, Director
Division of Incident Response Operations
Office of Nuclear Security and
Incident Response

Attachment: As stated

cc: D. DeLattre, IAEA

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cc: D. Lattre, IAEA

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