



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

July 2, 1999

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OFFICE OF THE  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

MEMORANDUM TO: Chairman Dicus

FROM: Hubert T. Bell *Hubert T. Bell*  
Inspector General

SUBJECT: LICENSING SUPPORT NETWORK

As you know, the agency has been working toward the development of a Licensing Support System (LSS) / Licensing Support Network (LSN) for more than 10 years. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has followed this issue during that time and has identified critical issues that needed to be addressed for an LSS to actually materialize.<sup>1</sup>

Our keen interest in this area continues. Therefore, we are concerned that many of the impediments to the development of an LSS that we identified in past audit reports still exist as impediments to the development of an LSN. These issues pertain to funding; intra-agency coordination; the ability to reach consensus on key issues among NRC, DOE, and other parties; and the myriad of technical considerations, identified in the December 1998 Labat-Anderson report,<sup>2</sup> that need to be addressed before an LSN design can be implemented. We believe the agency must ensure that these issues, which were not resolved in the past, do not impede the successful implementation of the LSN.

Given that the deadline for implementing the LSN is just 2 years away (August 2001), we reiterate the importance of overcoming these issues so that the agency can meet its responsibility to develop and operate the LSN in the required time frame. We strongly support NRC's goal to get the LSN operational at the earliest possible date, prior to the required date, to give LSN users time to ensure that it meets their needs.

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<sup>1</sup> See *NRC Needs to Provide Strong Direction for the Licensing Support System*, OIG/95A-01, March 17, 1995, and *Survey of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Information Management Needs for Current and Future Licensing Demands for Disposal of High-Level Nuclear Waste*, OIG/96A-01, February 12, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> *Issues Related to the Establishment of the Licensing Support Network and the Licensing Support Network Administrator's Compliance Assessment Program*

While we acknowledge that the agency is working to overcome some initial hurdles to the LSN, we feel it necessary to mention them here because they are so critical to the success of the project. Although the Commission is working toward the approval of a Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) assigning responsibility for the LSN to a specific NRC office, this SRM has yet to be signed. Given that this critical document has not been finalized, the agency has not appointed a Chairperson for the LSN Advisory Review Panel (LSNARP) or an LSN Administrator. Therefore, the agency has not conducted a kickoff LSNARP meeting to initiate the system planning and development process. Furthermore, the agency needs to resolve key budgetary issues before the work of developing an LSN can begin in earnest.

We feel it is imperative that the Commission ensure that the office to which LSN responsibility is assigned has the necessary resources and support to make the LSN project a success. The need to put the LSN project on a fast track may necessitate that the agency conduct matters differently than in the past. As part of our ongoing audit, OIG will continue to follow the progress of the LSN and identify issues that need to be resolved for the LSN work to succeed. As we have done in the past (for example, on the Year 2000 issue, which was also time-critical), we will keep your staff informed of key issues as they arise so they may be addressed as quickly as possible. If we may be of further assistance, please contact Tom Barchi (415-5915) or Ren Kelley (415-5977) of my staff.

cc: Commissioner Diaz  
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