

January 6, 2005

Mr. A. C. Tollison, Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Institute of Nuclear Power Operations
Suite 100
700 Galleria Parkway, SE
Atlanta, Georgia 30339-5957

Dear Mr. Tollison:

Thank you for your letter dated December 13, 2004, forwarding the final version of the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations' (INPO's) "Principles for a Strong Nuclear Safety Culture." I applaud your efforts to enhance safety culture at U.S. nuclear power plants. I also appreciate past opportunities to address INPO members at INPO's annual CEO conferences. As you may recall, in my remarks during those conferences, I supported the application of "Safety Management" as a key subset of safety culture, including utilization of technical and cultural aspects that I believe are necessary for assuring safety. The Commission agrees that a strong safety culture is an important part of nuclear safety and has directed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff to increase its efforts in this area.

In accordance with the Commission's 1989 "Policy Statement on the Conduct of Nuclear Power Plant Operations" (54 FR 3424), nuclear power plant licensees have a duty and an obligation to foster the development of a safety culture at each facility and to provide a working environment throughout each facility that ensures safe operations. On August 30, 2004, the Commission directed additional actions in this area in Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) 04-0111, "Recommended Staff Actions Regarding Agency Guidance in the Areas of Safety Conscious Work Environment and Safety Culture." These actions include monitoring efforts by the industry to assess safety culture, keeping the Commission informed of such efforts, and enhancing the Reactor Oversight Process treatment of cross-cutting issues to address safety culture more fully.

The NRC looks forward to working with INPO and other stakeholders to ensure that an appropriate safety culture exists throughout the industry.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Nils J. Diaz