

May 9, 2006

MEMORANDUM TO: Christopher I. Grimes, Director
Division of Policy and Rulemaking
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

FROM: Brian E. Thomas, Branch Chief, **/RA/**
Research and Test Reactors Branch
Division of Policy and Rulemaking
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SUBJECT: RESEARCH AND TEST REACTOR PROGRAM EVALUATION
PLAN FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

This memorandum provides you with the Fiscal Year 2006 plan for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the Research and Test Reactor program. This is in accordance with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004-2009, which requires the evaluation of several of its safety programs to determine if the programs and processes are effective in supporting established performance goals.

If you have any questions regarding the objectives of the enclosed evaluation plan, please contact Mr. Patrick J. Isaac, Project Manager, NRR/ADRA/DPR/PRTA, at 301-415-1019 or via email at pxi@nrc.gov.

Enclosure: As stated

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FY 2006 Evaluation Plan
for
Research and Test Reactor Program

1.0 Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the RTR program:

- 1) to determine if it has been effective in supporting the agency's strategic plan goals and;
- 2) to provide objective information and recommendations for program planning and improvement.

2.0 Scope of Evaluation

The evaluations will include major components of the program, but could be narrowed to focus on a particular program process. The specifics of the final scope will depend upon performance data that are already collected by each program, or, if necessary, on a particular controversy or concern with program performance at the time of the evaluation. To provide objective information in support of program planning, the evaluations will be scheduled such that the results will be available for the development of budget assumptions and resource allocation decisions for the upcoming budget year.

3.0 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the RTR Program will be accomplished as follows:

Evaluation Team

The evaluation will be performed by a team comprised of experienced staff from the Division of Policy and Rulemaking, Research and Test Reactors Branch. Additionally, the team may include staff from other disciplines and offices as necessary and appropriate. The evaluation team will be led by a lead project manager.

Evaluation Plan

Phase 1 - Safety Metrics

The first phase of this evaluation should confirm that the program is performing in accordance with its current safety metrics as specified in the NRR Operating Plan for fiscal years 2005 and 2006. This phase of the evaluation will assess the following major components of the program:

- a) RTR PM and Licensing Activities
- b) RTR Inspections

Phase 2 - Program Improvement

The second phase of this evaluation will focus on process improvement and resource utilization such that the results will be available for the development of budget assumptions and resource allocation decisions for the upcoming budget year.

Phase 2 should address the following:

- Does the program have the right goals, success measures and targets?
- Do the current functions of the RTR program satisfy the goals of the NRR operating plan?
- Do the program functions have the correct focus (e.g., should the focus of the license renewal process be on age related degradation as in power reactor)?
- Do the program functions or processes include a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement?
- Is the staff's implementation of the program efficient and effective? In what areas can regulatory efficiencies be gained or the program be made more effective?
- Are processes and standards in place for work products and are they followed?

4.0 Evaluation Findings

Once the evaluation is completed, the team will prepare a report describing the reviewed activities with appropriately based recommendations in each areas as to whether the process should continue unchanged or what changes or modifications should be considered by management. The team will conduct an exit meeting with the program owner before issuing a final report. The program owner should review the results of the evaluation, to ensure correctness and validity of the information assessed but not the evaluation conclusions.

5.0 Schedule

The schedule for completing the program evaluation is as follows:

- Establish team membership - February 10, 2006
- Complete program evaluation - June 30, 2006
- Develop draft report - July 20, 2006
- Issue final report - August 25, 2006