

December 2, 2008

MEMORANDUM TO: Stephen D. Dingbaum
Assistant Inspector General for Audits

FROM: Brian W. Sheron, Director */RA/*
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

SUBJECT: STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS: EVALUATION OF THE
NRC'S USE OF PROBABILISTIC RISK ASSESSMENT IN
REGULATING THE COMMERCIAL NUCLEAR POWER
INDUSTRY (OIG-06-A-24)

REFERENCE: ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AUDITS,
MEMORANDUM DATED JULY 7, 2008

I am responding to your July 7, 2008, memorandum requesting the status update of Recommendation 3 in the subject audit report. Recommendations 1 and 2 were previously closed.

OIG Recommendation 3

Conduct a full verification and validation of SAPHIRE Version 7.2 and GEM.

Background

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) memorandum, dated July 7, 2008, states that this recommendation will be closed when the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) releases Version 8 of the SAPHIRE code.

Status Update

In our status update to the OIG dated January 17, 2008, we stated that the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research expected to release SAPHIRE Version 8 by the end of calendar year 2009. This schedule represented a 6-month delay in the original release date for SAPHIRE Version 8 and was caused by problems in acquiring necessary SAPHIRE development contractor staff resources. Although we have taken steps to resolve this issue, SAPHIRE code development staff was occasionally required to support higher priority NRC work during 2008, including development of the Reliability and Availability Data System (RADS) software. In addition, the scope of independent verification and validation (IV&V) activities has been expanded to ensure that SAPHIRE Version 8 is of sufficient quality for general staff use. These issues have resulted in an additional 4-month delay in the release of SAPHIRE Version 8.

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We currently are processing a request for Chairman approval to modify the SAPHIRE Version 8 agreement to complete the general release version. This modification supports necessary work to complete Version 8, including necessary quality assurance activities such as the IV&V. The IV&V activities, which we anticipate will take 1 year to complete, are expected to begin in March 2009. Based on these considerations, our expected release date for SAPHIRE Version 8 has been extended from December 2009 to April 2010.

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