

February 12, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO: Frederick D. Brown, Director  
Division of Inspection and Regional Support  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

FROM: John McHale, Chief **/RA/**  
Operator Licensing Branch  
Division of Inspection and Regional Support  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF JANUARY 13, 2010, MEETING WITH INDUSTRY  
FOCUS GROUP ON OPERATOR LICENSING ISSUES

On January 13, 2010, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff held a public meeting with the Industry Focus Group (FG) on operator licensing to discuss a number of operator licensing issues. Enclosure 1 lists the attendees at the meeting.

This meeting was the latest in a series of meetings intended to promote efficient, effective, and consistent preparation and administration of initial operator licensing examinations. The discussions addressed issues related to simulator fidelity and testing, licensed operator medical conditions, licensing operators at new reactors, and other operator licensing issues. Enclosure 2 is the agenda for the meeting, and the discussion topics are summarized in Enclosure 3.

Representatives of the NRC and the industry agreed that this meeting was useful for the exchange of information and agreed to continue the periodic meetings.

Enclosures: As stated

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(301) 415-1412

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List of Attendees - NRC / Industry Focus Group Meeting on Operator Licensing  
January 13, 2010

Name	Organization
John (Jack) McHale	NRC / HQ
Frederick Brown	NRC / HQ
Bruce Boger	NRC / HQ
Mike Junge	NRC / HQ
David Muller	NRC / HQ
John Munro	NRC / HQ
Siegfried Guenther	NRC / HQ
Tim Kolb	NRC / HQ
Mark Lintz	NRC / HQ
Sam Hansell	NRC / RI
Malcolm Widmann	NRC / RII
Hironori (Pete) Peterson	NRC / RIII
John Butler	Nuclear Energy Institute
Kent Hamlin	Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO)
Mike Llewellyn	INPO
Chuck Sizemore	Florida Power and Light
Gregg Ludlam	Exelon
Michael Petersen	XCEL Energy
Timothy Dennis	ANS Standards Committee
Paul Hippely	Westinghouse
Steve Reininghaus	Entergy
Dave Souza	Dominion
Mark Van Sicklen	Progress Energy
Harry Fetterman	PPL Susquehanna
J. R. Steely	Duke Energy

AGENDA FOR THE CATEGORY 2 PUBLIC MEETING WITH THE  
INDUSTRY FOCUS GROUP (FG) ON OPERATOR LICENSING ISSUES

January 13, 2010; 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Two White Flint North, Room 10C2  
11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852-2738

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>LEAD</u>
Introductions and Opening Remarks	NRC/FG
Public Input	Public
Generic Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Simulator fidelity and testing (ANSI/ANS 3.5 and DG)</li><li>- Operator medical issues</li><li>- New reactor licensing update</li></ul>	NRC/FG
Public Questions and Answers	Public
Initial Licensing Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Exam projections / scheduling (RIS 2009-11)</li><li>- SRO-only question guidance update</li><li>- FY 2009 Examination results</li><li>- License eligibility (ACAD 09-01 revision)</li><li>- Making examinations public (follow-up from last meeting)</li><li>- Other</li></ul>	NRC/FG
Public Questions and Answers	Public
Requalification Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- IP-71111.11 revision update</li></ul>	NRC/FG
Focus Group Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Responding to applicant questions during the written exam</li><li>- Time limit for making E-plan classifications</li><li>- Timelines/milestones for NRC-developed exams</li><li>- NUREG-1021 errata</li></ul>	FG
Public Questions and Answers	Public
Summary / Conclusion / Action Item Review	NRC/FG

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### GENERIC ISSUES

#### Simulator fidelity and testing

The NRC staff informed the Focus Group (FG) that a new revision of ANSI/ANS-3.5, "Nuclear Power Plant Simulators for Use in Operator Training and Examination," was published in September 2009. The staff further stated that a revision to Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.149, "Nuclear Power Plant Simulation Facilities for Use in Operator Licensing Examinations," was being drafted by the staff to clarify and endorse the new revision of ANSI/ANS-3.5, and that the draft revision to RG 1.149 should be issued for public comments within a few months. The staff suggested that the NRC and the nuclear industry conduct a workshop on the new revision of ANSI/ANS-3.5 and the draft revision to RG 1.149 during or soon after the public comment period (which typically is 60 to 90 days). The workshop would serve as a means to obtain additional comments on the draft revision to RG 1.149, and as training on the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149 for both NRC and industry personnel. Based upon this time line, the NRC staff stated that a revision to RG 1.149 could be finalized and issued later this year or early next year.

The NRC staff stated that a key advantage associated with adopting the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149 would be the use of a well-defined methodology for scenario based testing (SBT) of simulators, thus reducing the uncertainty in the use of SBT associated with the 1998 version of ANSI/ANS-3.5. In addition, the staff stated that SBT appears to be a better way to test simulator capabilities when compared to conducting stand-alone testing, and that the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149 would also provide more details and reduce uncertainty in the use of the simulator for crediting reactivity manipulations for license applicants. The staff also voiced their strong preference to have all licensees test and maintain their simulators in accordance with a common set of simulator standards, as presented in the 2009 revision to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and the upcoming revision to RG 1.149. In addition to the advantages associated with SBT, the staff stated that the use of a common set of simulator standards by all facility licensees would allow the licensees to share their experiences with and knowledge of the standards, and allow the NRC staff to perform simulator inspections and assess simulator inspection results in a much more uniform fashion. The staff believes that licensees can transition to the revisions of ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149 with little or no impact to their simulator testing and maintenance programs.

The FG acknowledged the information presented by the NRC staff, and the FG stated that the best way to ensure that facility licensees adopt the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149 was for the NRC to eliminate any potential regulatory uncertainties. The FG stated that sources of regulatory uncertainties include the wording of the revision of RG 1.149 (and any exceptions the RG may take with regard to the 2009 revision of ANSI/ANS-3.5), and how the NRC would inspect simulators and assess simulator issues for facilities which have adopted the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149. The NRC staff stated that Inspection Procedure (IP) 71111.11, "Licensed Operator Requalification," will be reviewed for any necessary changes as a result of the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149, and that during the transition to the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149, the NRC would consider enforcement discretion. With regard to transitioning to the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149, the FG postulated a range of from three to 18 months for a facility to complete the transition. Finally, a FG member offered to make a presentation regarding SBT at the NRC's upcoming Examiner Conference.

### Operator medical issues

The NRC staff informed the FG that the NRC issued an Information Notice (IN) in September of 2009 [IN 2009-21], which addressed several recent examples of improper or incomplete medical testing of licensed operators. The staff informed the FG that they have recently spent a considerable amount of time on licensed operator medical issues, and that the medical testing deficiencies described in the IN appeared to be due to shortcomings with respect to attention to detail. In addition, the staff informed the FG that the NRC is cognizant of the need to be consistent with regard to licensed operator medical issues, and that although some medical enforcement cases may appear to be very similar, there are differences in the details, such as whether or not certain medical tests were performed at all, how long have medical tests been missed, and/or how many licensed operators had not been properly tested. The staff also noted a related IN regarding licensed operator medical issues was issued in 2004 [IN 2004-20].

The NRC staff informed the FG that a working committee had been recently established to revise ANSI/ANS 3.4, "Medical Certification and Monitoring of Personnel Requiring Operator Licenses for Nuclear Power Plants," and that the primary goals would be to make ANSI/ANS 3.4 easier to use and clarify its requirements. In addition, the working committee plans to include a benchmarking review of the medical requirements for pilots established by the Federal Aviation Administration. The staff informed the FG that efforts to revise ANSI/ANS 3.4 would take approximately 1.5 years.

The FG acknowledged the information presented by the NRC staff, and stated that they typically have little involvement with licensed operator medical issues, as these issues tend to be isolated to their facilities' medical and licensing personnel. The FG further stated that missing medical tests appeared to be caused by a lack of knowledge or incorrect interpretations of ANSI/ANS-3.4, and recommended that the NRC conduct a webcast on licensed operator medical issues, to include participation by appropriate NRC and industry staff, the NRC's medical review officers, and the facilities' medical review officers. The NRC staff responded that a licensed operator medical seminar is currently being planned and that the staff would investigate the possibility of webcasting the seminar.

### New reactor licensing update

NRC staff from the Office of New Reactors provided an update of new reactor operator licensing activities. The activities discussed included the development of knowledge and abilities catalogs for the new reactor types, plans and time lines for administering written examinations and operating tests to license applicants, and time lines for obtaining new NRC simulators and training NRC examiners on the new reactor types. In response to a question from the FG, the NRC's new reactor staff informed the FG that operator licensing at new reactors will not be performed by a dedicated new reactor staff, but instead will be performed by existing NRC examiners with additional examiners being added to each NRC Region.

## INITIAL LICENSING ISSUES

### Examination projections

The NRC staff informed the FG that the annual Regulatory Issue Summary (RIS) regarding the scheduling of licensed operator examinations will be issued earlier in 2010 (May/June) when compared to previous years (July/August). The staff further informed the FG that although the RIS includes the upcoming year's examination schedule, the RIS should not be considered as

an additional mechanism to request changes to the examination schedule as previously agreed upon by the NRC Regional offices. The NRC staff noted that in some instances NRC examiner resources are limited, and that even shifting examination schedules by one week may not be feasible. The staff encouraged facility licensees within a NRC Region to coordinate with each other with regard to examination schedule changes to better facilitate the use of available NRC resources. The FG acknowledged the information presented by the staff.

#### SRO-only question guidance update

The NRC staff provided a brief update on the implementation of SRO-only written examination question guidance developed by Region II. The staff noted that Region II expended considerable effort in developing the SRO-only question guidance, and that comments internal to the NRC have been resolved and incorporated into a revision of the guidance. The staff further stated that in the near term, the NRC will likely post the latest revision of the SRO-only question guidance on the NRC Operator Licensing public website, and that the guidance will likely be eventually added to a new revision to NUREG-1021, "Operator Licensing Examination Standards for Power Reactors." The staff re-iterated that even after posting on the web, the latest revision of the SRO-only question guidance was for guidance only and is not required to be used. The FG acknowledged the information presented by the staff, and stated that the SRO-only question guidance was a good tool for reducing the uncertainty associated with developing SRO-only questions.

#### FY 2009 examination results

The staff informed the FG that the site-specific NRC initial licensing examination results for FY 2009 showed an upward trend in test scores, arresting the previously observed downtrend in scores.

#### License eligibility (ACAD 09-001)

The NRC staff informed the FG that there was a meeting in November 2009 with the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) regarding licensed operator eligibility and INPO's proposed revision to ACAD 09-001. The senior INPO representative then indicated that the revision to ACAD 09-001 was undergoing final INPO concurrence, with final approval expected to occur by February 2010. The INPO representative further described the implementation of the revision to ACAD 09-001, including communications with the nuclear industry, allowing both the revision and current version of ACAD 09-001 to be used for eligibility during all of 2010 (transition year), and then retiring the current version of ACAD 09-001 in January 2011. The FG and the NRC staff discussed possible licensing class scenarios and which ACAD would apply, and the NRC staff emphasized that eligibility should not be determined by the selective use of parts of the current version of ACAD 09-001 and parts of the revision to ACAD 09-001, but instead eligibility should be determined by the use of either the current version of ACAD 09-001 in its entirety or the revision to ACAD 09-001 in its entirety.

#### Making examinations (including GFE) public (follow-up from last meeting)

The NRC staff informed the FG that there appears to be no regulatory or legal reasons which would prevent delaying the public release of NRC initial licensing examinations after they have been administered. Although delaying the public release of examinations appears possible, the staff informed the FG that there were several process details that the NRC and the industry needs to review, including how much of a delay is acceptable, whether a delayed release would

be on a case by case basis or for all examinations, and how to accommodate applicants who currently receive a copy of the written examination if they fail it. In addition, the staff informed the FG that examinations which have not been publically released would likely be subject to public release if the NRC received a Freedom of Information Act request. Furthermore, the staff noted that even if examinations were not publically released, questions from previously administered NRC examinations would still be considered "bank" questions if used on future NRC examinations. The FG acknowledged the information presented, and informed the staff that in order to be useful for administering audit examinations, the public release of NRC site-specific examinations should be delayed by two years, and the public release of NRC Generic Fundamentals Examinations should be delayed by six months.

## REQUALIFICATION ISSUES

### IP-71111.11 revision update

The NRC staff updated the FG on the status of revising Inspection Procedure (IP)-71111.11, "Licensed Operator Requalification Program." Currently, a draft revision to IP-71111.11 has been reviewed internally by the NRC, the internal comments are being resolved, and potential changes to the IP based upon the revisions to ANSI/ANS-3.5 and RG 1.149 are being reviewed. The NRC staff informed the FG that a draft revision to IP-71111.11 may be completed in the first half of 2010, at which time the nuclear industry will have the opportunity to review the draft revision consistent with current NRC practices for communicating reactor oversight process issues.

## FOCUS GROUP ISSUES

### Responding to applicant questions during the written exam

The FG asked the NRC staff if the NRC must be contacted prior to responding to any applicant questions asked during the administration of the written examination. The FG further stated that this can cause a delay in responding to applicant questions if the NRC must always be contacted first, and that in at least one instance, the delay was about 30 minutes. The NRC staff responded that a 30 minute delay was not per expectations, and that a NRC point of contact should be readily available by telephone to answer any questions that might occur while the written examination is being administered. The staff further responded that the NRC point of contact for the examination should be contacted prior to making a significant examination change, such as whether to provide a reference or additional information, with additional consideration given for prior NRC contact if the NRC authored the examination. For non-significant examination changes or if the NRC did not author the examination, prior NRC contact in response to applicant questions was not necessary. However, the staff further stated that regardless of whether the NRC was contacted prior to making an examination change, all applicant questions during the examination and the response to those questions by the proctor (including any examination changes) must be documented and provided to the NRC after the examination has been administered.

### Time limit for making Emergency Plan classifications

The FG asked the NRC staff if the NRC had adopted a new time standard during examinations for applicants to complete Emergency Plan (E-Plan) classifications. The FG reported that until recently, the time standard for E-Plan classifications during examinations was always 15 minutes, but that on some recent examinations, the time standard has been reduced, ostensibly

because the 15 minute time standard should not only include classifying the event, but also include completing a form and initiating the notification by telephone. The NRC staff responded that it had not adopted a common new time standard for E-plan classifications to be used for all examinations, and that any reductions to the typical 15 minute time standard have occurred on an exam-by-exam basis. The NRC staff further affirmed what the FG reported, that for examinations in which the typical 15 minute time standard for E-plan classification has been reduced, the reduction was based upon the fact that if a plant event actually occurred, then the regulatory requirements would be to not only classify the event within 15 minutes, but to also initiate the notification within 15 minutes. The NRC staff informed the FG that test item time standards used on examinations, including the time standard for E-plan classifications, should be determined by each facility, subject to the review of each examination's NRC chief examiner.

#### Timeline/milestones for NRC-developed exams

The FG asked the NRC to consider facility timelines and milestones when the NRC is writing initial licensing examinations, so that facility licensees can review and validate the examinations consistent with their programs. The FG further informed the NRC staff that when facility licensees write examinations they start about one year before examinations are to be administered. The NRC staff acknowledged the information presented, and stated that in general, the NRC cannot start to write examinations a full year before the exam. The NRC staff further stated that the NRC will work with facilities to meet agreed upon timelines and milestones, but ultimately, when the NRC writes an examination, the NRC will meet the timelines and milestones contained in NUREG-1021.

#### NUREG-1021 errata

The FG informed the NRC staff that it had identified some minor errors with NUREG-1021, Revision 9, Supplement 1, and asked whom on the NRC staff these errors could be e-mailed to. The NRC staff provided the FG with a point of contact.

#### SUMMARY / CONCLUSION / ACTION ITEM REVIEW

In summary, the NRC staff and attendees agreed that the meeting was useful, and that communications between the staff and the FG are good. A future meeting date for late summer or early fall of 2010 was discussed.

#### Action Items

1. The NRC staff will submit for public comments a proposed revision to RG 1.149, "Nuclear Power Plant Simulation Facilities for Use in Operator Licensing Examinations," within a few months.
2. During or soon after the public comment period for the proposed revision to RG 1.149, the NRC will coordinate with the nuclear industry to conduct a simulator workshop.
3. The NRC staff will set up a medical issues seminar, possibly to be webcast, between the NRC's contracted physicians, facility medical personnel, and other interested individuals.
4. The NRC staff will make available via the operator licensing public website the latest revision of supplemental NRC guidance for developing and reviewing SRO-only written examination questions.

5. The NRC staff will continue to review the process changes necessary to allow for the implementation of the delayed public release of NRC site-specific and generic fundamentals examinations.
6. The NRC staff will issue for industry review revisions to IP 71111.11 and its associated significance determination process document, possibly in the first half of 2010.