



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

Mr. Thomas Joyce, Chairman
Nuclear Energy Institute
Emergency Preparedness Working Group
President and Chief Nuclear Officer
PSEG Nuclear LLC-N09
P. O. Box 236
Hancocks Bridge, NJ 08038

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY RESPONSE DATA SYSTEM MODERNIZATION SCHEDULE

Dear Mr. Joyce:

In your role as Chairman of the nuclear power industry's Emergency Preparedness Working Group, I am writing to request your assistance in getting licensees to establish firm schedules that support modernization of the Emergency Response Data System (ERDS), and to advise you of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) plans to discontinue the use of "dial up" modems as a means for licensees to transmit required ERDS data to the NRC.

As you know, the ERDS has served the industry and the NRC well since its introduction in the early 1990s by significantly improving the efficiency and effectiveness of information sharing following incidents. However, the original ERDS infrastructure uses a technology that is now obsolete, and is becoming increasingly difficult to support and maintain. In addition, this infrastructure cannot be maintained indefinitely because of information technology security concerns and strict Federal information security requirements. In 2005, the NRC initiated a comprehensive, multi-year effort to modernize all aspects of the ERDS, including the hardware and software that constitute the ERDS infrastructure at NRC headquarters, as well as the technology used to transmit data from licensed power reactor facilities. Over the past several years, the NRC has solicited voluntary licensee participation in a program to replace the existing modems used to transmit ERDS data with Virtual Private Network (VPN) devices (refer to NRC Regulatory Issue Summary 2009-13). The NRC has conducted extensive outreach activities to coordinate this transition with industry and to identify and resolve potential technical and policy issues. Additionally, since early 2009, the NRC has provided no-cost technical assistance to licensees in support of individual site ERDS modernization activities.

By letter dated March 3, 2010 (ADAMS ML100261085), the NRC informed the nuclear power industry of the NRC's ongoing modernization of the ERDS infrastructure, and strongly encouraged each licensee to make a timely transition to modern VPN technology using NRC-provided resources and assistance. For reasons explained in that letter, licensees were further encouraged to avail themselves of no-cost NRC resources and technical support by September 2011. The NRC wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the many licensees who have either completed their ERDS modernization activities or are very close to doing so. Those sites that have completed the transition to VPN now have less burdensome testing requirements, faster data transmission rates, and increased system reliability.

Unfortunately, a number of licensees/sites have either not provided the NRC with a specific ERDS transition date, or have provided planned transition dates that are beyond the September 2011 target date – some well into 2012.

The NRC intends to decommission the existing dial-up modem technology by June 30, 2012. This reflects an extension of the NRC's previously announced schedule. This extension should ensure that sufficient time is available for licensees to effect the transition. Also, this schedule provides additional time to modernize the control room simulator ERDS transmission apparatus for those sites that use simulators to support emergency preparedness drills and exercises.

The NRC is asking that you urge licensees to contact their assigned NRC Project Manager (PM) in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation as soon as possible, but no later than July 31, 2011, to inform the PM of their firm transition date or their inability to support modernization to VPN technology by June 30, 2012. Once appropriate schedules are agreed upon, if exigent circumstances arise that preclude a licensee's transition on or before the scheduled date, the licensee should promptly inform its assigned PM. The Nuclear Energy Institute Commitment Management Program would provide a useful process for managing these activities.

While the NRC would prefer to continue to manage this process collaboratively, more formal regulatory tools may need to be considered if we are not successful at effecting the timely transition to the VPN solution.

Thank you for your continuing assistance in this project. If you have any questions, I may be reached at 301-415-8003 or Jim.Wiggins@nrc.gov. You may also contact Scott Morris at 301-415-7482 or Scott.Morris@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

James T. Wiggins, Director
Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response

cc: M. Pacilio, Exelon
S. Perkins-Grew, NEI
E. Leeds, NRR