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December 20, 2013

Mr. Michael C. Cheek
Acting Director
Division of Construction Inspection and Operational Programs
Office of New Reactors
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Subject: Request for NRC Acceptance of an Alternative Process for Small Modular Reactor Design Certification Application Submittals

Project Number: 689

Dear Mr. Cheek:

On behalf of the nuclear energy industry, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI)¹ is requesting NRC acceptance of an alternative process for Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Design Certification Application (DCA) submittals. The attached white paper describes a phased DCA submittal process (Tier 2, then Tier 1) that builds upon the concepts we proposed at an NRC public meeting on November 19, 2013. It is our view that a phased DCA submittal would comply with NRC regulations and policy, could be permitted through an exercise of NRC staff discretion in the acceptance review process, and would not have any adverse impact on NRC DCA review schedules.

Permitting a phased approach to SMR DCA submittals would result in regulatory efficiencies by 1) enabling Tier 1 submittals, including ITAAC, to be submitted and reviewed only after Tier 2 design information has matured via the RAI process, and 2) by allowing sufficient time to identify and implement generic improvements to ITAAC in SMR DCAs. As we discussed on November 19, standardization and related ITAAC

¹ NEI is the organization responsible for establishing unified nuclear industry policy on matters affecting the nuclear energy industry, including the regulatory aspects of generic operational and technical issues. NEI's members include all utilities licensed to operate commercial nuclear power plants in the United States, nuclear plant designers, major architect/engineering firms, fuel fabrication facilities, materials licensees, and other organizations and individuals involved in the nuclear energy industry.

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improvements for SMRs are envisioned that leverage the inherent benefits of modular SMR design and construction and lessons learned from implementation of AP1000 ITAAC at Summer and Vogtle. The extent to which these improvements to ITAAC can be implemented by near-term SMR DC applicants depends in large part on the availability of a phased submittal alternative.

Near-term SMR DC applicants need to know as soon as possible whether NRC staff will accept a phased DCA submittal so that they may prepare their upcoming DCA submittals. Our proposal does not address whether a phased DCA submittal alternative should be available to other than near-term SMR DC applicants; we believe that this question can be addressed later based on experience with the near term DCAs.

To support near term DC applicants, we request the earliest possible determination by the NRC staff on the acceptability of the phased DCA submittal alternative. If it would be helpful, we are prepared to meet with the staff in January 2014 to address any questions and otherwise facilitate the staff's consideration of the industry proposal. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Marc Nichol (mrn@nei.org; 202-739-8131) or me.

Sincerely,



Russell J. Bell

Attachment

c: Ms. Andrea D. Valentin, NRO/DCIP, NRC
Mr. Brian C. Anderson, NRO/DCIP/IGCB, NRC
Mr. Joseph Colaccino, NRO/DARR/APOB, NRC
NRC Document Control Desk