



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

May 26, 2015

Dr. James O'Brien, Director  
Office of Nuclear Safety (AU-30)  
U.S Department of Energy  
19901 Germantown Road  
Germantown, MD 20874

Dear Dr. O'Brien

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is extending an invitation to the Department of Energy to participate in an inter-agency workshop on "defense-in-depth." This concept is fundamental to our ability to accomplish our missions, but also one that presents various challenges. This workshop will help us explore this concept and share our views.

Defense-in-depth (DID) is a safety philosophy ingrained in the NRC regulatory structure. It is an approach to designing and operating nuclear facilities that provides reasonable assurance to prevent and mitigate accidents that release radiation or hazardous materials. The key is creating multiple independent and redundant layers of defense to compensate for potential human and equipment failures so that no single layer, no matter how robust, is exclusively relied upon. Defense in depth includes the use of access controls, physical barriers, redundant and diverse key safety functions, and emergency response measures. Although DID has a long history within the commercial nuclear community that NRC regulates, there is still inconsistency in how DID is defined and implemented, and more importantly how it is determined if there is adequate DID. The NRC staff is currently writing a technical report (called a NUREG) to summarize and provide insights from this history.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore how this concept is addressed among various agencies whose mission involves ensuring the health and safety of the public and the environment. This exploration will involve identifying the different challenges and sharing insights into possible solutions. We feel participation of your agency would be of great benefit to all attending.

The workshop will take place over two days. On the first day, each agency will give a presentation of how the concept of DID has been used at their agency. The second day will consist of a series of topical discussion of challenges to using DID and how these challenges might be resolved. A draft agenda and list of discussion topics will be sent out before the workshop. We welcome your input to ensure the workshop is as useful as possible.

The NRC will capture the workshop proceedings in a technical report. Participants will have a chance to review this report before it is finalized.

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The workshop will be held at NRC headquarters in Rockville, MD (the White Flint complex) on August 26 and August 27, 2015. Mary Drouin will be the NRC lead for this workshop and will be coordinating with you. Nonetheless, please contact her at 301 251-7574, email [mary.drouin@nrc.gov](mailto:mary.drouin@nrc.gov) if you plan to participate and if you have any questions.

We look forward to your participation at this very important workshop.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Brian W. Sheron, Director  
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

Cc: Matthew Moury  
Associate Undersecretary  
of Environment, Health, Safety and Security  
Richard L. Donovan, Senior Advisor  
Office of Enterprise Assessments  
Department of Energy

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