

July 6, 2016

Mr. Gary Peters, Director  
Licensing and Regulatory Affairs  
AREVA Inc.  
3315 Old Forest Road  
Lynchburg, VA 24501

Dear Mr. Peters:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter to Chairman Stephen G. Burns, dated April 29, 2016. I want to thank AREVA for providing its views on the review process for topical reports and how the NRC and industry can be more effective and efficient in this area.

I agree that topical reports can enhance efficiency in the licensing process and may lead to enhanced safety and operational margins for nuclear power plants. Therefore, consistent with the direction of Project Aim, the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) has initiated concerted efforts toward better capturing the potential benefits of topical reports and has increased management oversight accorded to topical reports. Specifically, over the past 8 months communications have increased between NRC and vendor management. For example, certain vendors, including AREVA, and NRR management representatives hold monthly meetings or telephone calls to discuss workload and progress for all topical reports under review. This enhanced focus has already resulted in accelerated progress and completion of some vendor-identified high priority topical reports.

As noted in your letter, the most challenging aspect of the topical report review process has to do with prioritization of resources given competing needs. Recently, the agency completed an extensive effort to rebaseline its activities in the context of Project Aim. We are exploring whether applying the same or similar criteria for prioritizing topical reports would be appropriate. This would ensure that each topical report is reviewed in a time frame commensurate with its relevance to the agency's mission.

We are in the process of revising NRR office instruction LIC-500, entitled "Topical Report Process," to include a new prioritization scheme as well as metrics to more appropriately capture the varying priorities of different topical reports. The NRC staff agrees that some of the other proposals in your letter for enhancements to the topical report process may be appropriate for inclusion in the LIC-500 revision. We are planning on publicly engaging AREVA and other external stakeholders in revising the process for reviewing topical reports and are currently considering which methods (e.g., workshop, public meeting) would be the most effective means for having such an interaction. Meanwhile, your continued engagement will assist the NRC not just with ongoing reviews, but also with planning for upcoming topical report reviews.

G. Peters

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Within the broader context of Project AIM, the NRC will continue to identify and implement ways to increase our efficiency and effectiveness. Your feedback, as well as that of all our stakeholders, is essential for our continued success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

***/RA Michael R. Johnson Acting for/***

Victor M. McCree  
Executive Director  
for Operations

G. Peters

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Sincerely,

***/RA Michael R. Johnson Acting for/***

Victor M. McCree  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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