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Disposition of Information Related to the Time Period that Safety-Related Structures, Systems, and Components are Installed

Comment On: NRC-2016-0098-0001

Disposition of Information Related to the Time Period that Safety-Related Structures, Systems, or Components are Installed; Draft Regulatory Issue Summary

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RULES AND PROCEDURES SECTION

General Comment

UCS applauds the NRC staff for developing the draft Regulatory Issue Summary (RIS). In addition, UCS recognizes and appreciates the public meeting held by the NRC staff on this topic on January 20, 2016 (see <https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML16014A249>). The earlier draft of the RIS that was made available prior to that meeting and the discussions during the meeting added significantly to our understanding the many dimensions to this matter. That meeting also resulted in the draft RIS being revised to include Scenarios and Cases that better convey the NRC's expectations. The time and effort that went into the earlier draft and public meeting clearly delayed issuance of the final RIS, but will almost certainly result in a higher quality and more useful RIS. UCS looks forward to the final RIS and believes it will be have useful safety benefits.

The RIS is addressed to holders of and applicants for reactor operating licenses and owners of permanently shutdown reactors with irradiated fuel remaining in spent fuel pools. It is not addressed to owners of permanently shutdown reactors with all irradiated fuel transferred into dry storage, but these owners should receive this information. In September 2014, the NRC issued a final rule on Continued Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel (see Federal Register notice at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-09-19/pdf/2014-22215.pdf>). The final rule contemplates three timeframes: a period of up to 60 years after reactor shut down during which irradiated fuel may remain in spent fuel pools, an additional 100 year period during which all

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irradiated fuel may remain in dry storage, and a third period of infinite duration during which irradiated fuel may remain in dry storage. Because these periods (especially the infinite one) are likely longer than ALL time periods that safety-related structures, system, and components (SSC) housing and monitoring the irradiated fuel in dry storage are designed and licensed to remain functional, the information in the RIS seems equally relevant to these licensees, too.

The first paragraph under the INTENT section on page one states that the "RIS addresses instances where a licensee becomes aware of credible information pertaining to the time period that a safety-related SSC is installed...". By itself, that statement is vague regarding of both what constitutes "becoming aware" and "credible information." The appendix help convey the NRC's expectations for awareness while the footnote help put "credible information" in better context. Additional text fleshing out these terms and the NRC's expectations would not hurt, but the draft RIS as-is seems to strike a reasonable balance between making the point and belaboring it.

The third full paragraph on page three of the draft RIS refer to an NRC staff study on component aging from its review of operating experience between 2007 and 2001. UCS highlighted that NRC effort in our 2013 report on the NRC and nuclear power safety (see http://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/documents/nuclear_power/NRC-Nuclear-Safety-Report-2013.pdf) as one of the positive outcomes achieved by the agency during 2012. That report identified areas where component aging processes could be improved; this draft RIS follows up to implement an improvement. UCS does not subscribe to the pro-active or leading indicator approach many advocate. Instead, we favor the best reactive process like the NRC demonstrated in this case. The NRC's component aging study identified some shortcomings in an otherwise sound process. The shortcomings were real enough to establish as credible. Yet the shortcomings were identified early enough to permit course corrections to guide the process back in the right direction before they factored into bigger problems.