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The Honorable Ivan Selin
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Selin:

SUBJECT: INSPECTIONS, TESTS, ANALYSES, AND ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA (ITAAC) FOR DESIGN CERTIFICATIONS

During the 377th meeting of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, September 5-7, 1991, we discussed the staff's requests for Commission guidance pertaining to ITAAC, contained in SECY-91-178 and SECY-91-210. We had the benefit of presentations by and discussion with members of the NRC staff and representatives of NUMARC, as well as the documents referenced.

The industry and NRC staff appear to have reached an agreement on the general features of ITAAC. However, there are still open questions on the scope and details of ITAAC and the role of the "validation attributes."

In SECY-91-210, the NRC staff requests Commission guidance on an industry proposal that would allow the staff to issue final design approvals (FDAs) for standardized plants prior to staff approval of the proposed ITAAC. While the regulations require an applicant for a design certification FDA to submit proposed ITAAC, the contents of the FDA itself are not specified in 10 CFR Part 52. The staff has identified three possible policy options, including a proposed approach from NUMARC to resolve this issue. For the Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (ABWR), we were told that much work remains to complete the final ITAAC. However, a proposed ITAAC is expected to be submitted to the staff in December 1991, a year before the scheduled issuance of the FDA. Although the staff recommends Option 2, we believe that Option 3 is preferable. Option 3 would allow the staff to issue the FDAs only for the GE ABWR and the CE System 80+ before completing the ITAAC review and approval and then reevaluate the process for future applications.

The adoption of Option 3 should not affect the staff's safety reviews or result in additional backfit constraints on the staff, since the Commission had previously commented in its February 15, 1991 SRM on the provisions of 10 CFR Part 52 by stating that "ITAAC are to provide reasonable assurance that a plant which references the design is built and will operate in accordance with the design certification, and thus are not to be used to reach a final conclusion on any safety question associated with the design. ITAAC should not be used to impose additional design requirements."

Sincerely,

David A. Ward
Chairman

References:

1. SECY-91-178, Memorandum dated June 12, 1991 For the Commissioners from James M. Taylor, Executive Director for Operations, Subject: Inspections, Tests, Analyses, and Acceptance Criteria (ITAAC) for Design Certifications and Combined Licenses (Predecisional)
2. SECY-91-210, Memorandum dated July 16, 1991 for the Commissioners from James M. Taylor, Executive Director for Operations, Subject: Inspections, Tests, Analyses, and Acceptance Criteria (ITAAC) Requirements for Design Review and Issuance of a Final Design Approval (FDA) (Predecisional)
3. Staff Requirements Memorandum dated February 15, 1991 from Samuel J. Chilk, Secretary, to James M. Taylor, Executive Director for Operations, Subject: SECY-90-377 - Requirements for Design Certification Under 10 CFR Part 52