

Message Plan

NRC Inspection Manual Chapter 1601

Communication and Coordination Protocol for Determining the Status of Offsite Emergency Preparedness

Background

Section 50.54(s)(3) to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) states that for a nuclear power reactor facility, “the NRC [Nuclear Regulatory Commission] will base its findings on a review of the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] findings and determinations as to whether State and local emergency plans are adequate and capable of being implemented...”

A Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] Between the Department of Homeland Security / Federal Emergency Management Agency and Nuclear Regulatory Commission Regarding Radiological Emergency planning, Preparedness and Response (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS Accession No. ML15344A371) establishes a framework of cooperation between FEMA and NRC on radiological emergency response planning and preparedness matters. Section V.A.8 of the MOU identifies FEMA as responsible to “inform the NRC if a disaster significantly damages the area around a licensed operating utilization facility and FEMA seriously questions the continued adequacy of offsite emergency preparedness.” The MOU also establishes the disaster initiated review (DIR) process.

FEMA’s Standard Operating Guide (SOG), entitled “Assessment of Offsite Emergency Preparedness Infrastructure and Capabilities Following an Incident in the Vicinity of a U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Licensed-Nuclear Power Plant,” describes the FEMA DIR process used to assess the impact on offsite infrastructure and emergency response capabilities in response to a natural disaster or event (e.g., hurricanes, tornados, floods, severe storms, or earthquakes).

NRC Inspection Manual Chapter (IMC) 1601, "Communication and Coordination Protocol for Determining the Status of Offsite Emergency Preparedness," was developed to provide guidance to NRC staff to enable effective coordination and communication between FEMA and the NRC before, during, and after a disaster in assessing the status of offsite emergency preparedness (EP) capabilities as they relate to FEMA’s determination of continued reasonable assurance that appropriate measures can and will be taken to protect the public health and safety in the event of a radiological emergency at an NRC-licensed nuclear power reactor facility. IMC-1601 identifies respective NRC office and Regional responsibilities and authorities for: 1) coordinating with FEMA in assessing the status of offsite infrastructure and response capabilities; 2) obtaining FEMA’s determination as to continued reasonable assurance, and 3) evaluating the impact of FEMA’s determination on NRC decisions regarding licensee restart activities or continued operation.

IMC-1601 Revision Message Plan

IMC-1601 is being revised to address the lessons-learned from Hurricane Irma occurring in September 2017, and further informed based on a joint NRC/FEMA/industry table-top exercise conducted on April 12, 2018 to validate the proposed changes to both IMC-1601 and FEMA's SOG.

The lessons-learned include the following:

- Ensure alignment between IMC-1601 and FEMA SOG.
- Ensure alignment with NRC Incident Response Procedure (IRP) 240, "Natural Phenomena."
- Ensure effective interagency coordination and communication at Regional level (prior to, during & post event).
- Clarify NRC's intent regarding immediate post-event assessment.
- Potential role of licensee in supporting offsite assessment (FEMA SOG consideration).
- Clarify government authority or responsible independent entity for making determinations regarding electric grid stability concerns.
- Clarify NRC authorities in regards to reactor restart and continued operation, with potential or known damage to offsite infrastructure and/or response capabilities around the nuclear power reactor site.

Significant Changes

In general, IMC-1601 was reformatted to provide additional clarify and to align with existing formatting guidelines. However, the following listing highlights significant changes made to IMC-1601:

1. (Section 03.06) Provide Federal agency point of contact on questions regarding electric grid stability and power restoration urgency in support a Commission decision on granting enforcement discretion to allow a reactor to restart or to preclude a shutdown following a severe national disaster.
2. (Section 06.03) Discussion updated to provide general guidelines regarding licensee ability to restart or continue power operation with potential or known degraded offsite infrastructure and response capabilities. Step c added to address scenario where one unit at a multi-unit site has shut down, but the second unit remains at power, and whether the shutdown unit could restart if it is within its Technical Specification safety limits.
3. (Section 07.01) Guidance for Regional State Liaison Officer was revised to align with IRP-240 and revision to FEMA SOG, specifically in regards to actions associated with immediate post-event assessment, preliminary capabilities assessment (PCA), and if a decision is made by FEMA to perform a DIR.

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4. (Sections 07.02 and 07.03) Guidance for Chief, Reactor Licensing Branch, and Director, Division of Preparedness and Response, was revised to ensure alignment with respective FEMA Headquarters counterparts.
5. Reference to specific Commission policy decisions inserted regarding consideration of whether a deficiency in offsite infrastructure and response capabilities constitutes a “substantial health or safety issue” with regard to plant operation.

How to Access

- NRC Inspection Manual Chapter 1601 is available online in NRC's document system under the ADAMS Accession No.: ML18093A372.
- A copy of FEMA’s DIR SOG is available on the FEMA public website at: <https://www.fema.gov/es/media-library/assets/documents/97530>

Outreach (Next Steps)

Audience

Internal Stakeholders

1. Provide a copy of Message Plan, along with IMC-1601 revision, for distribution as office/region determines appropriate:
 - Office of the Executive Director of Operations (via Assistant for Operations),
 - Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response (NSIR) Front Office,
 - Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA),
 - Office of Public Affairs (OPA),
 - Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR), and
 - Regions 1, 2, 3 and 4 (via Regional State Liaison Officers).
2. Contact the following to offer the opportunity for further discussion or training at appropriate opportunities:
 - NRR/Division of Reactor Licensing (DORL) for division management and respective project managers, and
 - Region management (via Regional State Liaison Officers).
3. Continue to support “just-in-time” training for NRC Headquarters staff as request, and in support of Regional State Liaison Officers for Region staff, per IRP-240.

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External Stakeholders

1. FEMA/Technological Hazards Division

- Provide a copy of Message Plan, along with IMC-1601 revision, for distribution to appropriate Headquarters and Regional staff.
- Continue to support opportunities to further table-top exercise opportunities to ensure continued alignment at the Headquarters and Regional levels between agencies.
- Perform an annual review of IMC-1601 with FEMA SOG to ensure continue alignment and address lessons-learned from future events.

2. Industry

- Provide a copy of Message Plan, along with IMC-1601 revision, for distribution to industry members.
- Provide a copy of Message Plan, along with IMC-1601 revision, to EP points of contact for Next Era Energy and Entergy Operations.