

June 18, 1979

UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

SECY-79-395

INFORMATION REPORT

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For: The Commissioners

Thru: Executive Director for Operations *JW*

From: Harold R. Denton, Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Subject: OPERATIONAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM (OSP)

Purpose: To notify the Commission of the staff's plans to modify the Standard Technical Specifications (STS) for nuclear power plants to provide for an OSP.

Discussion: The Division of Operating Reactors has an ever increasing workload, a large portion of which entails the processing of changes to licensee's technical specifications. Some of these changes are of relatively minor safety significance.

The number of technical specification changes requested by licensees that must be processed is increasing at a rate disproportionate to the number of facilities with operating licenses. To process each of these items, the staff is required to perform a review, write a safety evaluation, prepare a Federal Register notice, and assemble a license amendment package. We believe this "paper work" burden is causing an unnecessary amount of staff man hours to be spent on the processing of actions having minor safety significance.

Many of the technical specification changes we process are more significant from a public health or safety standpoint and certainly warrant the "full treatment" associated with license amendments. However, in some cases, the nature of the change is considerably less significant from a safety standpoint and thus should be processed in a more streamlined fashion. This is especially true with regard to changes to Surveillance Requirements.

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Consequently, we have developed the concept of the "Operational Surveillance Program" (OSP). Simply stated, the STS, as they are known today, will be divided into two groups. The first group will consist of those specifications that delineate requirements directly related to safe operation of the reactor, i.e., Safety Limits, Limiting Safety System Settings, Limiting Conditions for Operation (LCOs), Design Features and Administrative Controls. Under current regulations, these requirements would continue to be technical specifications and any proposed changes will be subject to the same regulatory and procedural requirements as today's technical specifications, e.g., staff review, written safety evaluation and notice in the Federal Register. The second group will contain the required surveillance activities that are necessary to assure the performance capability of the LCOs. This group will be essentially comprised of the Surveillance Requirements in the existing STS. This second group of requirements will be called the "Operational Surveillance Program" (OSP). It will be referenced in the Technical Specifications, but will not be part of them.

The Administrative Controls Section of the Technical Specifications will contain provisions that will allow changes to be made to the OSP upon request from the licensee, without an amendment to the license, provided certain criteria are met. These criteria include:

*licensee to  
make  
determination?*

1. A determination that the change will not materially reduce the overall level of facility safety.
2. Documentation of the fact that the change has been reviewed and found acceptable by both the Facility Review Group and the Company Nuclear Review and Audit Group.
3. Documentation that the change does not decrease the effectiveness of the OSP. Sufficiently detailed information must be submitted to support the rationale for the change without benefit of additional or supplemental information. Information submitted may consist of analyses or refinement of analytical techniques.

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✓ Licensee proposed changes to the OSP will become effective automatically 15 days after staff receipt of the proposed change. Licensee proposed changes may become effective in less than 15 days after receipt, if approved by the staff. Within the 15 day time period, however, the staff may notify the licensee that the proposed change is, in the staff's opinion, unacceptable for the OSP and requires a license amendment because it would be a violation of the administrative controls portion of the technical specifications (see paragraphs 1-3 quoted on previous page). If necessary, appropriate actions are available to the staff to prohibit or negate implementation of a proposed change considered unacceptable by the staff via an Order to Show Cause pursuant to 10 CFR §2.202. If the OSP were retained as part of the technical specifications, the licensee would have the burden of proving that a licensee-initiated OSP change was safe. The proposed new OSP concept has a disadvantage in that, if a licensee insisted in going forward with a change over staff objections (which the licensee would have the right to do, since no staff approval would be required), then the staff would have the burden of showing that the licensee's change violated the administrative controls portion and thus required prior staff approval. However, it is expected that only in unusual cases will licensees proceed in the face of staff objection. Furthermore, the staff is prepared, in any such unusual cases, to proceed with prompt enforcement action.

We plan to revise the STS to incorporate the OSP concept by September 1979, and plan to implement it in a systematic fashion on subsequent operating license issuances. We also plan to utilize the OSP concept for plants already licensed with Standard Technical Specifications on a voluntary basis. We believe the effective implementation of this program will, over the long term, materially improve the licensing process and help reduce the future backlog of Technical Specification change requests.

We estimate a yearly manpower savings of 0.24 man-years per year for each STS facility with OSP based on elimination of at least two STS amendments per year. This manpower savings would be initially offset in part by the 0.05 man-years required to convert STS facilities to the OSP concept.

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For non-STS facilities, we estimate a yearly manpower savings of 1.08 man-years per year for each non-STS facility converted to STS and OSP partly as a result of the reduction in number of amendments afforded by conversion to STS. Again, this manpower savings would be initially offset in part by the 0.4 man-years required to convert the facility to the STS and OSP concept. We do not plan to convert non-STS plants to the OSP concept unless they are also converted to the STS format. There are now 19 units with STS and 51 units with custom specifications. This will change, within about a year, to about 34 units with STS and 46 units with custom specifications as a result of voluntary conversions and new OL issuances.

We plan to announce our intent to implement the OSP concept by sending the enclosed letter to all power plant licensees and OL applicants. We will have copies of the OSP and the revised STS available for reference by September 1979.

Coordination: The Office of the Executive Legal Director has no legal objection.



Harold R. Denton, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:  
Sample Letter to All Power  
Plant Licensees and OL  
Applicants

DISTRIBUTION  
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Commission Staff Offices  
Exec Dir for Operations  
ACRS  
Secretariat

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

All Power Reactor Licensees

Gentlemen:

This letter is to notify you of our plans to modify the format of the Commission's Standard Technical Specifications (STS).

As you know, there are four sets of STS (one for each NSSS vendor type plant) that are used by applicants and the staff to develop plant specific Technical Specifications for each new plant that is licensed to operate. The current STS, as well as customized Technical Specifications for plants that pre-date the STS, contain Surveillance Requirements for demonstrating that the Limiting Conditions for Operation (LCOs) are being satisfied for the various modes of plant operation. Over the years, these Surveillance Requirements have become more extensive and detailed. We believe that the level of assurance that LCOs are being met has been significantly increased by the performance of these surveillance activities. However, because of the way current Technical Specifications for all plants are structured, the Surveillance Requirements are an integral part of them; and thus, like the Technical Specifications, are also an appendage to the operating license. Consequently, any change to the Surveillance Requirements must be processed as a license amendment. Generally, this involves the application for a license amendment from the licensee, a staff review, a documented safety evaluation, and the publication of a notice in the Federal Register. This process is followed regardless of the nature of the change. Some of these changes have proven to be significant from the standpoint of public health and safety while the majority have not. Nevertheless, the volume of documentation needed to support each change, whatever its significance, is approximately the same. This "paperwork burden" has caused considerable delay in the processing of these changes, by the NRC, with a large resultant backlog. We do not feel this backlog is in the best interest of the public, or licensees.

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is that the  
regulatory  
standard for this  
agency?

To help alleviate this problem, we have developed the concept of an Operational Surveillance Program (OSP). Simply stated, the STS as they are known today will be divided into two groups. The first group will consist of those specifications that delineate requirements directly related to the safe operation of the reactor, i.e., Safety Limits, Limiting Safety System Settings, LCOs, Design Features and Administrative Controls. These requirements will continue to be Technical Specifications and any proposed changes will be subjected to the same regulatory and procedural requirements as today's Technical Specifications, i.e., staff review, written safety evaluation and notice in the Federal Register. The second group will contain the surveillance related activities that are necessary to assure the performance capability of the LCOs. This second group of requirements will be called the Operational Surveillance Program (OSP) and will be referenced in the Technical Specifications, but will not be part of them.

*How can they be performed?*

The Administrative Controls Section of the Technical Specifications will include provisions that will allow changes to be made to the OSP without a license amendment provided certain criteria are satisfied.

These criteria are:

1. A determination that the change will not materially reduce the overall level of facility safety.
2. Documentation of the fact that the change has been reviewed and found acceptable by both the Facility Review Group and the Company Nuclear Review and Audit Group.
3. Documentation that the change does not decrease the effectiveness of the OSP. Sufficiently detailed information must be submitted to support the rationale for the change without benefit of additional or supplemental information. Information submitted may consist of analyses or refinement of analytical techniques.

Licensee proposed changes to the OSP will become effective automatically 15 days after staff receipt of the proposed change. Licensee proposed changes may become effective in less than 15 days after receipt if approved by the staff. Documentation of the staff agreement with changes will be in the form of revised pages of the OSP subsequently transmitted by letter. Within 15 days, the staff may notify the licensee that the proposed change is, in the staff's opinion, unacceptable for the OSP and requires a license amendment review.

*Staff negotiation of*

*Administrative process continued?*

Implementation of a proposed change which is unacceptable would, in the staff's opinion, be a violation of the administrative controls portion of the technical specifications and the staff would take prompt enforcement action to prevent or abate any such violation.

We plan to revise the STS to incorporate the OSP concept by September 1979, and plan to implement it in a systematic fashion on subsequent operating license issuances. We also plan to utilize the OSP concept for plants already licensed with STSs on a voluntary basis. We believe the effective implementation of this program will, over the long term, materially improve the license process and reduce the future backlog of Technical Specification change requests.

We plan to have copies of the revised STS available for your reference by September 1979. If you have any questions or desire any more information on the program, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Darrell G. Eisenhut, Acting Director  
Division of Operating Reactors  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation