



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
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JUL 2 1979

50-329

MEMORANDUM FOR: Robert L. Baer, Chief, Light Water Reactors Branch No. 2,
Division of Project Management

FROM: H. Rood, Project Manager, Light Water Reactors Branch No. 2,
Division of Project Management

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF MEETING TO DISCUSS CASEWORK SCHEDULES

see 50-311 for encl.

On June 13, 1979, Harold Denton, Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, and other members of the NRC staff met in Bethesda, Maryland with representatives of utility companies having CP and OL applications under review. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss (1) staff policies regarding the review of current CP and OL applications, and (2) the criteria for establishing priorities for the review of those applications. The meeting was held in two sessions; the morning session included utilities with OL applications that the staff estimates will be ready to load fuel in 1979, and utilities with CP applications in hearing. The afternoon session included other OL and CP applicants. The utilities invited to attend the morning and afternoon sessions are given in Enclosures 1 and 2.

Both morning and afternoon sessions opened with a presentation by Mr. Denton and other members of the NRC staff. Since the two presentations were essentially the same, a single summary is given below. Following each presentation was a question and answer period in which the utility representatives had the opportunity to discuss their views with Mr. Denton. Their questions and comments and the staff responses are also summarized below.

NRC STAFF PRESENTATION

Mr. Denton opened the meeting by stating that both the industry and the NRC staff have a challenging period ahead in dealing with the Three Mile Island (TMI) accident and its effects on the licensing of nuclear plants. He indicated that the staff is not prepared to issue any new licenses until the results of the staff's "TMI Lessons Learned" task force are available. This approach is being taken to avoid foreclosing any options for design changes that may be desirable. For example, if the installation of reactor water level instrumentation or a reactor head venting system is proposed and adopted as a requirement, such modifications could be much more difficult if a plant is started up and the reactor vessel irradiated.

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Mr. Denton then described the interim NRR organization that has been established to deal with TMI-related issues. Several task groups have been formed, including TMI Direct Support, Evaluation of IE Bulletins and Orders, TMI Lessons Learned, Unresolved Safety Issues, and additional DOR support. About 70 NRR personnel that previously were assigned to casework (review of CP and OL applications) have been assigned to these groups. During the course of the next six to eight months, these groups will be completing their assignments, and the group members will be folded back into their original organizations. In the interim, the NRR efforts on casework must be reduced. Enclosure 3 identifies the impact of the TMI effort on currently docketed CP and OL applications.

The impact of TMI varies for the various review branches. Almost all the members of some branches such as the Reactor Systems Branch, are assigned to the TMI effort. Other branches are less affected. Enclosure 4 summarizes the effects of the TMI effort on the NRR Division of Systems Safety. This enclosure was discussed at the meeting by Frank Schroeder, the acting DSS Director.

Mr. Denton then outlined the efforts being made to obtain additional reviewers so as to minimize the delay of current casework. Enclosures 5 and 6 indicate the support for these efforts that exists at the Office of Management and Budget and in Congress.

Mr. Denton pointed out that it would be very difficult to bring new, inexperienced people into NRC to alleviate the manpower shortage during the six to eight month period that the TMI groups will be in existence. For this reason, the effort to obtain additional NRR reviewers is concentrated on bringing in experienced people from other government agencies, such as the Department of Energy's National Laboratories, the Corps of Engineers, the Naval Ship Research and Development Laboratory, and from other parts of NRC. The NRC Commissioners have authorized the transfer of 24 people to NRR from other offices within NRC.

Mr. Denton indicated that he was disappointed that, so far, no utility or utility group had come forward with a proposed plan of action for changes to their plant as a result of the TMI accident. He indicated that the industry appeared to be waiting for the NRC to decide what changes were necessary as a result of TMI. Mr. Denton pointed out that the primary responsibility for safety still rests with the industry, since budget and manpower constraints limit the NRC role to auditing the industry's efforts.

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During the meeting, a group of utilities with Westinghouse nuclear steam supply systems (Virginia Electric Power Company, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Public Service Electric and Gas Company) indicated that it had a plan of action to be taken for its plants (North Anna 2, Diablo Canyon 1 and 2, and Salem 2) prior to and after issuance of operating licenses. These recommendations were then presented at the meeting by the Virginia Electric Power Company representative (see Enclosure 7). Other utilities also indicated that they had such studies in progress, and that groups such as the Atomic Industrial Forum did also.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

A number of questions were asked by the utility representatives present. Some of these questions and the NRC staff response are given below.

Q: What resources will the staff commit to the review of a TMI accident assessment report prepared by a utility that is not high on the priority list?

A: The staff would run such reports through the "Lessons Learned" group as a first step. In case there are more such reports that can be immediately reviewed, the staff would be guided by the priority list given in Enclosure 3.

Q: Can industry provide NRC with the needed manpower to speed up the casework reviews?

A: TVA appears to be the only possibility, since it is a Government agency. Mr. Denton indicated that he plans to discuss this possibility with TVA management. The staff also is looking at the DOE labs, such as INEL and Oak Ridge. The conflict of interest laws preclude use of industry personnel and in fact, the staff has been criticized by GAO for even using DOE contractors.

Q: Since the next five OL applications scheduled for fuel loading are Westinghouse plants, could a combined review be conducted to save staff resources and expedite the review?

A: The staff encourages such combinations. Also, the staff suggests that non-TMI-related open issues can be worked on by the utilities and solutions found even if staff reviewers are not immediately available to review these applications. A list of some of the more critical non-TMI-related open items for the seven high priority OL reviews is shown in Enclosure 8.

Q: Explain the completion dates in Enclosure 8 and Enclosure 3.

A: The dates in Enclosure 3 are staff estimates of when construction will be complete. These correspond to the dates in the second column of Enclosure 8. These dates were used to determine the relative priorities of the OL reviews. The dates in Enclosure 8 listed under completion of licensing effort are based on the pessimistic assumption that no additional manpower becomes available.

Q: How is the Emergency Planning Branch affected by the TMI effort. They are not listed in Enclosure 4.

A: That effort is not in DSS (the subject of Enclosure 4) but in the Division of Site Safety and Environmental Analysis (DSE). DSE branches are not on the critical path for the first seven OL reviews.

Q: What will be the impact on licensing of the emergency planning rule-making hearings?

A: The staff has not assessed this question. The effect of TMI on emergency planning criteria is very difficult to predict at this time.

Q: When will the NRC establish its post-TMI criteria?

A: The staff is scheduled to brief the Commissioners on this subject for the first time the week of June 25. This is only the first step in the criteria-establishment process.

Q: Why can't the OL applications be put into the same category as operating plants, and allowed to operate while the post-TMI criteria are being developed? What is the difference between the units of a two unit plant, where one has an OL, the other does not?

A: OL applications are being held up to avoid foreclosing options for post-TMI changes that may be required by the NRC after the various groups evaluating the implications of TMI are finished. The principal difference between plants that have an OL and plants that have applied for, but not received an OL, is that the burden of proof is on an applicant to show that its plant is safe, whereas the burden of proof is on the staff if it concludes that a licensed plant is unsafe.

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Q: What is the impact of TMI on the staff project managers?

A: Four were assigned to the TMI groups, but most are still assigned to casework.

Q: We find the delay in licensing unacceptable; how many reviewers are required to keep the casework on the old schedule?

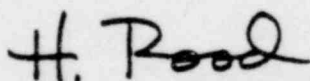
A: The TMI effort has taken 70 people from casework. Other NRC offices have been directed to provide 24 people to NRR to help make up the difference. We are hopeful of getting more people from DOE and other Government agencies. However, inexperienced people are a negative factor because they have to be trained. Even if the staff had the 70 people back, the old schedules probably could not be achieved. This is further compounded by the additional review effort that will result from the work of the TMI evaluation groups. The staff believes that some casework schedule slippage cannot be avoided, but a major effort is being made to minimize this. Probably an additional 100 reviewers could be advantageously used.

Q: How much delay are we talking about?

A: In the worst case, if no additional reviewers are obtained, issuance of the near-term OL's might be delayed as much as six months beyond the estimated construction completion date given in Enclosure 3.

Q: Can we get an update on the results of the efforts being made to get more people?

A: The staff will schedule a meeting similar to this one in a few weeks.



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Enclosures:
As stated

cc: See attached sheets