



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

June 10, 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Chairman
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Remick
Commissioner de Planque

FROM: James M. Taylor
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: QUARTERLY REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF THE THERMO-LAG FIRE
PROTECTION TASK ACTION PLANS

The sixth quarterly report on the status of the Thermo-Lag Action Plan is submitted as Enclosure 1. The third quarterly report on the status of the Fire Protection Task Action Plan (FP-TAP) is submitted as Enclosure 2.

Thermo-Lag Action Plan

During the past quarter, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff appraised the overall status and results of staff and industry efforts to resolve the Thermo-Lag fire barrier issues and, on the basis of this appraisal, reevaluated the course of action and identified options for resolving the issues. The staff sent the Commission the detailed status of the staff and industry efforts in SECY-94-128 of May 12, 1994. The staff proposed options, recommended a course of action, and asked the Commission for guidance in SECY-94-127 of May 12, 1994. The staff briefed the Commission on the options and recommended course of action on May 20, 1994.

In response to Commission concerns about the timeliness of the resolution of the Thermo-Lag issues, the staff sent a request for additional information (RAI) in accordance with 10 CFR 50.54(f) to those licensees that use Thermo-Lag fire barriers. The RAI was detailed in SECY-93-362 of December 30, 1993. During the past quarter, the staff reviewed the licensee responses to the RAI. The staff submitted the results of its review in SECY-94-128.

During the past quarter, the staff also continued to monitor and review the industry Thermo-Lag test program proposed by the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), formerly the Nuclear Management and Resources Council (NUMARC). The staff witnessed Phase 2 fire endurance tests and met with NEI representatives to review the results of Phase 2 tests. The staff and NEI also discussed the NEI "Industry Application Guide to Evaluate Existing Thermo-Lag Fire Barrier Systems." NRC and NEI met twice at the senior manager level.

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During the past quarter, the staff also (1) issued Generic Letter 86-10, Supplement 1, which presented fire endurance test acceptance criteria, (2) issued Information Notice (IN) 94-22, which gave the results of full-scale fire endurance and ampacity derating tests of 3-hour Thermo-Lag fire barriers that were conducted by the staff at Underwriters Laboratories, Incorporated, (3) issued IN 94-34, which identified concerns with ampacity derating data for Thermo-Lag 330-660 Flexi-blanket fire barriers, (4) reviewed a plant-specific fire endurance test program proposed by Commonwealth Edison Company (CECo) for LaSalle Station, (5) met with Florida Power and Light (FPL) to discuss FPL's proposed performance-based approach for resolving the Thermo-Lag issues at the Turkey Point and St. Lucie facilities, and (6) decided to conduct flame spread tests of Thermo-Lag panels in accordance with American Society of Testing and Materials standard E-84 to obtain additional information on the burning characteristics of Thermo-Lag. The staff reopened Part II of the action plan to track this activity.

Fire Protection Task Action Plan

During the past quarter the staff (1) continued its review of fire barriers other than Thermo-Lag and started to assess the results of the small-scale fire tests of these other fire barrier materials submitted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, (2) directed the review by Brookhaven National Laboratory of the shutdown procedures that use total or partial electrical shutdown to deal with fires, (3) developed a plan of action for developing a performance-oriented, risk-based fire protection regulation (SECY-94-090 of March 31, 1994), (4) issued NRR Office Letter 116, "Procedures for Implementation of New Regulations," March 8, 1994, (5) corrected the weakness with the Fire Induced Vulnerability Evaluation screening process, and (6) completed an evaluation of past NRR technical issues in the light of lessons learned from the reassessment of the fire protection program.

Schedules and Resources

As discussed below and in the action plans, the staff revised both action plans to add new tasks and to reflect resource and schedule changes. Some individual tasks have been delayed. However, the overall completion schedules and resource estimates have not changed. The staff appropriately considered the action plan tasks within the broad scope of all demands in accordance with T.E. Murley's memorandum of June 6, 1993, regarding priority determinations. The staff and its technical assistance contractors have continued to work on the highest priority tasks. In addition, there are no immediate detriments associated with postponing or extending the affected tasks. Therefore, the staff concluded that the changes are acceptable.

The completion date for Part I of the Thermo-Lag Action Plan has been changed from November 1994 to March 1995. The overall completion of Part I depends on the schedule of the ampacity derating test program planned by the NEI. As of the date of this status report, NEI has not provided a program schedule. Assuming NEI submits its test plan by August 1994, ampacity derating tests could be completed by early 1995. The revised completion date should allow time for the staff to review the test results. The new Part I completion date does not change the overall action plan completion schedule of December 1996.

On May 20, 1994, the staff briefed the Commission on the four options and the recommended course of action that it submitted in SECY-94-127. Several of the options have significant resource implications which could impact the Thermo-Lag Action Plan and the FP-TAP. If the Commission guidance changes the present course of action, or impacts schedules or resources, the staff will reflect those changes in the next quarterly status reports.

In the FP-TAP status report of February 4, 1994, the staff informed the Commission that it had shifted some of its fire protection resources from the FP-TAP to higher priority activities such as advanced reactors reviews, plant-specific licensing actions, and unplanned Thermo-Lag issues (such as resolving testing issues with the NEI; requesting and reviewing additional licensee information; reassessing the present course of action; and identifying and assessing options). This increased workload continued throughout the past quarter. The need to reassign these resources delayed the start of some of the FP-TAP tasks and the completion of others. The overall completion schedule, however, has not changed.

The staff will continue to submit quarterly status reports to the Commission. In the interim, the staff will inform the Commission of any significant findings or obstacles to the timely completion of the described actions.

Original signed by
James M. Taylor
James M. Taylor
Executive Director
for Operations

Enclosures:

1. Thermo-Lag Action Plan, May 20, 1994
2. Fire Protection Task Action Plan, May 20, 1994

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