

Official

JUN 16 1988

Docket No. 50-160
License No. R-97

Georgia Institute of Technology
ATTN: Dr. J. P. Crecine, President
225 North Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30332

Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: MEETING SUMMARY - GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH REACTOR - DOCKET NO. 50-160

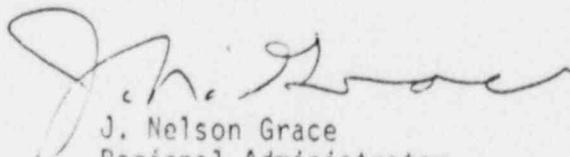
This letter refers to the management meeting conducted at your request at the Region II Office in Atlanta on May 16, 1988. The meeting involved a status update of your Neely Nuclear Research Center (NNRC) 1988 Action Plan.

It is our opinion that the meeting was beneficial and provided a better understanding of your ongoing actions to improve and upgrade the operation of the NNRC. Since you were unable to attend this meeting, I need to emphasize that we do not agree with the position taken at the meeting that the root cause is a long-term problem with health physics personnel. We believe that the root cause is lack of upper management attention to NNRC operations and that the problems with health physics personnel, lack of experiment control, failure to follow operating procedures, and other issues are all manifestations of this basic management problem. Dr. Kerr, your own consultant, apparently shares this viewpoint since he states in his report that "not much attention has been given to the center by the vice president's office except in times of crisis." Unless this deficiency is recognized, acknowledged and corrected, NRC confidence in the safety of future operations will be less than desired.

In accordance with Section 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," Part 2, Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, a copy of this letter and its enclosures will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room.

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, we will be pleased to discuss them.

Sincerely,


J. Nelson Grace
Regional Administrator

Enclosures: (See Page 2)

8806280275 880616
PDR ADOCK 05000160
P DCD

11
1095

JUN 16 1988

Enclosures:

- 1. List of Attendees
- 2. Meeting Summary

cc w/encls:

Dr. Ratib A. Karam, Director
 Neely Nuclear Research Center
 Georgia Institute of Technology

Dr. Thomas E. Stelson
 Vice President for Research
 Georgia Institute of Technology

bcc w/o encls:

State of Georgia
 Document Control Desk
 J. Lieberman, OE

RII
sv
 PFredrickson:es/nh
 5/8/88

RII
sv
 DMVerrelli
 5/8/88
cutt
 RII
 LAReyes
 5/14/88
 6/1/88

RII
sv
 ARGenson
 5/8/88
 RII
sv
 JPStohr
 5/8/88

RII
sv
 MLernst
 5/1/88
 6/9/88

ENCLOSURE 1

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Georgia Institute of Technology

T. E. Stelson, Vice President of Research
R. Fuller, Vice President of Business and Finance
R. A. Karam, Director, NNRC
J. M. Puckett, Acting Manager of Radiation Safety

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (Region II)

M. L. Ernst, Deputy Regional Administrator
C. W. Hehl, Deputy Director, Division of Reactor Projects (DRP)
A. F. Gibson, Director, Division of Reactor Safety
D. M. Collins, Chief, Emergency Preparedness and Radiological Protection
Branch, Division of Radiation Safety and Safeguards (DRSS)
G. R. Jenkins, Director, Enforcement and Investigation Coordination Staff
P. E. Fredrickson, Section Chief, DRP
G. B. Kuzo, Senior Radiation Specialist, DRSS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (Headquarters)

A. Adams, Project Manager, Nuclear Reactor Regulation

ENCLOSURE 2

MEETING SUMMARY

The Deputy Regional Administrator (DRA) opened the meeting by stating that it was Region II's understanding that the purpose of the meeting, requested by the Georgia Institute of Technology (GT), was to ensure that the NRC was aware of the status of the NNRC 1988 Action Plan and not to approve or disapprove of actions taken. The presentation began with the Director of the NNRC covering the improvements that GT had made at the NNRC. The DRA questioned whether this presentation was the final restart status report. The Director stated that it was only an interim effort and that a final report would be sent by the GT President updating today's information.

The first topic discussed was operator training. Training for additional operators began on April 11, 1988 and would continue for approximately 13 weeks. Upon completion of the training, GT hoped to license several additional operators. Control room procedures were addressed. Specifically, a procedure requiring two operators in the control room has been developed and approved. One operator would be the primary operator and the other would observe operations.

The Director next discussed a medical evaluation given to an NNRC staff member. The results revealed no evidence of medical or psychological problems. The DRA questioned the rationale for this evaluation. The Director stated that some issues in the past prompted the evaluation.

Replacement of radiation safety personnel was discussed. The Director stated that the planned upgrade of the health physics staff has been ongoing with positive results, such as improving the competency, responsiveness, and attitude of the staff. The Director stated that GT does not plan on differentiating between NNRC and GT lab duties for the health physics staff.

Procedure revisions were then addressed. In the short term, necessary experiment oriented procedures such as those relating to the cadmium spill in 1987, have been written and approved. In the long term, an extensive review of all the Georgia Tech Research Reactor (GTRR) procedures is in progress and planned to be completed in March 1989. The NRC asked whether the GT Nuclear Safeguards Committee had taken a position differentiating pre-startup and post-startup issues, such as necessary procedural revisions. The Director stated that the Committee was following the Action Plan closely and was aware of the specific restart issues.

Regulatory training was then discussed. This training, already implemented, has three elements. The elements include sensitivity to regulations, weekly staff discussions and an assigned NNRC staff member to review NRC generated documents.

The Director then addressed several visits from outside GT to the facility. Specifically discussed were the evaluations conducted by Dr. William Kerr from the University of Michigan, and visits from reactor staff members from the University of Missouri, University of Florida and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Director stated that NNRC staff members had not visited any other research reactor as part of the Action Plan.

In summary, the Director stated the ongoing efforts have resulted in a high level of management control at the NNRC. He also stated that the NRC had provided GT with a valuable lesson and that the NNRC staff believes that the GTRR is safe and should be restarted.

The DRA questioned what lesson was learned. The Vice President of Research (VP-R) agreed that the NNRC had management control problems and was possibly slow at recognizing the problems and taking appropriate personnel action. He did believe, though, that the problems were limited to the management control of health physics and that several NRC concerns were based on possibly inaccurate information. He stated that, nevertheless, GT has aggressively attacked the problems at the NNRC.

The DRA stated that poor reactor operations had been a recurring problem at Georgia Tech and was the principal cause of the August 1987 contamination incident. He said that this was our major concern regarding the adequacy of management controls, yet it appeared that existing operators were not receiving refresher training. The Director, NNRC, stated that these operators were definitely a part of the training program, and that he did not address them properly in the presentation.

Discussion continued on the root cause of the problems at the NNRC. Georgia Tech continued to believe that the primary problem was not necessarily an NNRC management problem, but rather a long-term health physics management problem which has since been remedied. The DRA disagreed. The meeting was adjourned with the DRA thanking Georgia Tech for the update presentation.