



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

January 7, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: Craig G. Erlanger, Director
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Michael Franovich, Director
Division of Risk Assessment
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

FROM: Ho K. Nieh, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE RISK-INFORMED PROCESS FOR
EVALUATIONS

By memorandum dated January 5, 2021, I received a recommendation for my approval (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML20261H475) that would put in place a new process for addressing very low safety significance issues that are within the licensing basis of a plant. This recommendation, referred to as the Risk-Informed Process for Evaluations (RIPE), is the implementation of Recommendation 5 from the low safety significance resolution (LSSIR) working group effort that I endorsed in a memorandum dated February 7, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20022A032).

RIPE is complementary to the Very Low Safety Significance Issue Resolution (VLSSIR) process that was built into the Reactor Oversight Process in January 2020. RIPE establishes a more efficient means to review licensing actions that address low safety significance (LSS) issues within the licensing basis by leveraging current regulations and risk-informed initiatives to allow licensees to request plant-specific exemptions or license amendments for LSS issues using a streamlined U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) review process. If a licensee elects to use RIPE, it would characterize the risk associated with the proposed exemption or amendment request using the NRC's "Guidelines for Analyzing the Safety Impact of Issues" (ADAMS Accession No. ML20261H462) and submit its request to the NRC. If the conditions described in the RIPE guidance are met, then the NRC staff would review the request using a streamlined process outlined in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation Temporary Staff Guidance TSG-DORL-2021-01, "Risk-Informed Process for Evaluations" (ADAMS Accession No. ML20261H473). This process ensures that the resources associated with the NRC's review are commensurate with the safety significance of the issue being evaluated.

I approve the RIPE recommendation for implementation in its entirety and direct the staff to conduct a self-assessment of the RIPE process no later than 2 years following implementation of RIPE. NRR staff should continue its efforts to expand the RIPE process to enable a broader set of low safety significance issues to be considered within RIPE and widen the set of licensees who can use RIPE. It is imperative that our regulatory activities at headquarters and

the regions are commensurate with the safety significance of the associated issues. If they are not, we are collectively and individually at risk of diminished credibility.

I greatly appreciate the initiative demonstrated by the staff in developing another tool to support the NRC's efforts to become a more modern, risk-informed regulator and I commend all of the staff who worked to develop RIPE.

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DATED JANUARY 7, 2021

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***via e-mail**

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