



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

January 22, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: David C. Lew, Regional Administrator, Region I  
Laura A. Dudes, Regional Administrator Region II  
John B. Giessner, Regional Administrator, Region III  
Scott A. Morris, Regional Administrator, Region IV

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 issue resolution (LSSIR) working group effort that I endorsed in my memorandum dated February 7, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20022A032).

RIPE establishes a more efficient means to review licensing actions that address low safety significance 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 low safety significance 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.

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On January 7, 2021, I approved the RIPE recommendation in its entirety for immediate implementation (see ADAMS Accession No. ML21006A324). I also encouraged the staff to continue to look for additional ways to expand the RIPE process to enable a broader set of issues to be considered within RIPE, as well as a broader set of licensees who can use the RIPE process.

As you are aware, the LSSIR effort resulted in the application of a new process in our inspection program, referred to as the very low safety significance issue resolution (VLSSIR) process, that provides inspectors another tool to advance our efforts in risk-informed regulation. The VLSSIR and the RIPE processes will enable the NRC to promptly resolve very low safety significant issues so that our collective focus can be maintained on matters of greater importance to safety. These two processes are complementary and aligned with the NRC's Principles of Good Regulation and the Commission's 1995 Policy Statement on the use of probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) methods, which states in part, that "[t]he use of PRA technology should be increased in all regulatory matters to the extent supported by the state of the art in PRA methods and data, and in a manner that complements the NRC's deterministic approach and supports the NRC's traditional defense-in-depth philosophy."

I commend the ongoing work and initiatives of the NRC staff at headquarters and the regional offices to ensure that our regulatory activities are conducted in a manner commensurate with safety significance. Through the use of risk-informed initiatives, like VLSSIR and RIPE, we are supporting our agency's transformational vision of becoming a more modern, risk-informed regulator and our response to the Commission's direction in the Staff Requirements Memorandum to SECY-19-0036, which states in part, that "[i]n any licensing or other regulatory decision, the staff should apply risk-informed principles when strict, prescriptive application of deterministic criteria such as the single failure criteria is unnecessary to provide for reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety."

I encourage you to share this information with your staff and continue to identify ways to support the NRC's transformational vision of becoming a more modern, risk-informed regulator. Our collective efforts in this regard will help the NRC make the safe use of nuclear technology possible in a way that makes the maximum contribution to the general welfare of the United States of America.

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE RISK-INFORMED PROCESS FOR EVALUATIONS  
DATED JANUARY 22, 2021

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**ADAMS Accession No. ML21012A128**

**\*via e-mail**

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DATE	1/22/2021		

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