




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

February 2, 2024

MEMORANDUM TO: Robert J. Feitel
Inspector General

FROM: Raymond V. Furstenuau  Signed by Furstenuau, Raymond
on 02/02/24
Acting Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S
SPECIAL INQUIRY INTO THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY
COMMISSION'S OVERSIGHT OF RESEARCH AND TEST
REACTORS (OIG CASE NO. I2100162)

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has reviewed the special inquiry by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) into the NRC's oversight of research and test reactors (RTRs) and has provided me with their findings regarding the report (Agencywide Document Access Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML23272A039). The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, the program office responsible for oversight of RTRs, evaluated each of the OIG's findings and observations in the special inquiry report and considered whether inadequate NRC oversight of RTRs led to a failure to identify and address problems with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) test reactor and other RTRs to determine if further NRC action is warranted. This memorandum provides staff-recommended actions to take as a result of the OIG inquiry. The staff plans to implement the identified actions by October 31, 2024.

The staff determined that many of OIG's underlying observations had been previously identified by the staff as part of their self-assessment activities. In general, the staff's internal assessment of the NRC's RTR oversight program found no significant gaps; however, the staff did identify several enhancements to internal processes and procedures that could be implemented. Overall, the staff determined that the combination of site-specific licensing bases, a robust emergency response infrastructure, and the current oversight program are appropriately risk-informed and continue to provide appropriate protection to public health and safety and the environment for RTRs, which could be further strengthened with the implementation of certain RTR inspection program enhancements.

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The NRC staff acknowledges OIG's important role in the NRC's oversight of nuclear reactors, its efforts to assess the NRC's oversight program for the nation's RTRs, and the importance of the findings documented in the OIG special inquiry report. External and internal assessments of NRC programs, such as the OIG report, offer valuable opportunities to gain insights and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs to protect public health and safety. As enclosed, the staff offers responses and clarifying comments on the specific findings and observations of the OIG special inquiry, including recommended actions to further improve NRC oversight and guidance.

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: Chair Hanson
Commissioner Wright
Commissioner Caputo
Commissioner Crowell

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