

November 18, 1998

SECY 98-269

For: The Commissioners
From: James L. Blaha, Assistant for Operations, Office of
the EDO
/s/
Subject: WEEKLY INFORMATION REPORT - WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER
13, 1998

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*No input this week.

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Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Approval of Vermont Yankee's Request to Use Risk Based Inservice Inspection

By letter dated November 9, 1998, the NRC approved ahead of schedule Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation's (VY, the licensee) request to use an alternative to the inservice inspection requirements of ASME Code, Section XI under 10 CFR Part 50.55a(a)(3)(I). The alternative was based on a risk informed approach and related to examination of Class 1 piping welds only at the VY nuclear power station. Specifically, VY proposed to reduce the examination of ASME Code, Section XI, Category B-J welds from 113 welds to 41 welds using ASME Code Case N-560 as a basis. VY also has augmented the implementation of Code Case N-560 at the VY nuclear power station by using methodology approved by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI).

The completion of the Vermont Yankee SER on risk-informed inservice inspection (RI-ISI) is item B.4 on the Chairman's Tasking Memorandum and was scheduled to be completed on November 30, 1998. The staff issued the SER ahead of schedule on November 6, 1998.

LOCA Tests

On November 9, 1998, RES and NRR staff personnel met to discuss the LOCA test 3 results for cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE)/Neoprene cables artificially preaged to 40 years. This test is one of six LOCA tests included in the Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) research program to address issues related to EQ of instrumentation and control (I&C) safety-related cables. The LOCA test 3 included four specimen groups. Group 1 consisted of control specimens with no preaging. Group 2 consisted of cable specimens preaged to match naturally aged cables. Group 3 consisted of 10 year naturally aged cables. Group 4 consisted of specimens preaged to 20, 40 and 60 years per the original qualification documentation. One result for post LOCA test 3 was that insulation resistance (IR) was acceptable for the Group 1, 2, and 3 cable specimens. However, leakage currents were observed on all Group 4 specimens during simulated LOCA environmental exposure. Following post-LOCA splice removal, 3 of the 5 specimens in Group 4 had acceptable IR results. For the remaining two specimens, conductor-to-ground IR improved to comparable levels following splice removal but conductor-to-

conductor IR was still lower than the other specimens. Similar to LOCA test 1, the poor condition of the jackets appeared to have allowed a moisture pathway into the splice which likely resulted in the lower IR values. These preliminary indications further support the conclusion that cable jacket integrity is important for maintaining cable function during LOCA environmental exposure.

BNL is further assessing the root cause by performing a post mortem examination. According to RES, BNL will report their results following the examination which is anticipated to be completed in four weeks. The report will be publicly available in 12 to 15 weeks following the completion of the examination.

Farley Unit 1

Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SN) voluntarily shut down Farley Unit 1 in August 1998 due to significant leakage in the "B" steam generator (SG). Subsequent inspections and engineering evaluations led the licensee to conclude the leakage was due, in part, to a throughwall axial indication located in the freespan region between the first and second tube support plates. The licensee stated at the time that the large 12.7 volt indication was the result of a "missed call" made the previous outage (i.e., eddy current analysts did not properly identify the bobbin coil signal that would have led to an enhanced inspection and assumed tube repair). After performing inspection and repair of SG "B" tubes, SN restarted Farley Unit 1 and reached 100 percent power on September 7, 1998. At about 50 percent power, the licensee observed indications of leakage on SG "B" on the order of 30 gpd which remained fairly constant until SN shut down in early October 1998 to perform its refueling outage inspection of the steam generator tubes. The licensee stated in a recent phone call with NRC staff that the source of the 30 gpd leakage was a 27 volt axial freespan crack located just above the 1st tube support plate in a peripheral tube in SG "B." SN plans to perform in situ pressure testing of the indication within the next two weeks. The staff will teleconference with the licensee to obtain additional inspection details next week. The licensee's apparent difficulty in detecting low voltage indications have implications for startup (with respect to satisfying TS plugging criteria) as well as a possible need for the licensee to perform a mid-cycle inspection.

Public Meeting on a Risk-informed 10 CFR 50

The NRC staff met with industry representatives and the public on October 27 and 28 in the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards

meeting room to discuss the need for modifying 10 CFR 50 to better include risk-informed insights. The meeting was transcribed, and the complete transcription is available on the NRC's external home page on the world-wide web at www.nrc.gov. Once you are at the homepage, click on the News & Info icon. Then click on Public Meetings. Then click on Meeting Transcripts. Finally, click on Public Meeting on Making 10 CFR Part 50 Risk-Informed. To read the transcript, choose and click on either of the two days. Representatives from Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) and South Texas Project were major participants at the meeting. During the meeting, there was significant agreement between the staff and meeting participants on (1) the overall objectives of a rulemaking program, (2) the need for improving areas in Part 50, and (3) use of a phased approach to improve Part 50 with some mechanism to feed back lessons learned to the process. The meeting identified three phases for improving Part 50: early emphasis on scope issues, then process changes, and finally specific rule modifications. Areas requiring additional discussion, particularly with the Commission, include (1) the definition of "important to safety" proposed by NEI that does not include concepts such as defense-in-depth, margin, and other positive aspects of the current licensing basis, (2) identification of areas where NRC prior approval is necessary versus licensee implementation based on existing methods, and (3) staff concern is greater when changes to plant design are proposed versus changes to operational requirements. NRC told meeting participants that it saw a need for NRC to have a framework to allow NRC to request licensees to provide risk insights for regulatory decisionmaking such as license amendments, enforcement, and performance assessment.

Fire Protection Inspection Workshop

On November 10, 1998, the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) held a one-day workshop on reactor fire protection inspections at the Double Tree Hotel, Rockville, MD.

Sam Collins joined over 150 attendees representing the NRC staff (NRR, Office of Analysis and Evaluation of Operational Data, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, and each region), citizen's groups, the press, licensees, industry service organizations (consultants and Architect Engineers), and such industry organizations as the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) and the Boiling Water Reactor Owners Group. NRC staff and managers made presentations on the future direction of performance assessment and NRC inspections, the results of the four fire protection functional pilot inspections (FPFIs), the results of significant fire protection

inspections at Quad Cities and Clinton, the risk and safety significance of the inspection findings, and staff efforts to promote the use of risk techniques and insights for fire protection inspections (e.g., for planning and follow up activities). The staff also discussed how it would develop options and form recommendations that the Commission will consider in setting the direction and future of the reactor fire protection program. Several licensees that received pilot FPFIs discussed their experiences. NEI discussed the results of an industry survey about licensee self assessments and presented a preliminary proposal for an industry initiative to strengthen the self-assessment process using FPMI procedures and techniques. There was also an open question and answer session for an NRC staff and industry panel. In closing, the NRC staff stated that it would like to meet with NEI to learn more about its proposed initiative and how it could fit into a framework for the reactor fire protection inspection program. NEI agreed to further dialogue with the staff. The staff will issue a workshop summary.

Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Nuclear Fuel Services

During the week of November 2, 1998, a member of the Division of Fuel Cycle Safety and Safeguards staff visited Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) in Erwin, Tennessee, to review on-site fire protection documentation related to license renewal and the KAST fuel amendment. NFS staff indicated that responses to the majority of the KAST request for additional information questions, which were sent on September 10, 1998, could be expected shortly.

Meeting With Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board Staff

On November 5, 1998, representatives of the Division of Waste Management met with Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board (NWTRB) staff to discuss the NWTRB review of Department of Energy's (DOE) Viability Assessment (VA) and comments on staff draft 10 CFR Part 63. In the next two weeks, NWTRB is planning on releasing its recent review of the high-level waste program that identifies the following key areas of uncertainty: seepage into repository drifts; waste package design providing long lifetimes (e.g., average lifetimes much longer than 10,000 years); potential for chemically reducing conditions in the saturated zone; and the evolving nature of repository design. NWTRB staff identified two requirements in the staff draft Part 63 (i.e., analysis of alternative designs and analysis of multiple barriers) that need further explanation to articulate better what is necessary for compliance. Additionally, NWTRB staff indicated one NWTRB member favored a peak dose compliance period that would be expected to be significantly longer than the 10,000 year compliance period in the staff draft Part 63.

General Electric Company Morris Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation License Renewal

On November 10, 1998, the Spent Fuel Project Office (SFPO) met with representatives from General Electric Company (GE) at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Headquarters for a pre-application meeting to discuss issues related to GE's submission of an application to renew the special nuclear material license for the GE - Morris (GEMO) independent spent fuel storage installation (ISFSI). The current license for the GEMO ISFSI will expire in May 2002. SFPO staff discussed the process for reviewing the application and presented a draft schedule for this effort. GE

indicated that the renewal application would be submitted by May 2000 to meet the timely renewal requirements of 10 CFR Part 72.

Spent Fuel Project Office Staff Meets with Holtec International

On November 12, 1998, staff from the Spent Fuel Project Office (SFPO) met with representatives of Holtec International (Holtec), an applicant for certificates of compliance for the HI-STAR 100 dual purpose cask system and its companion HI-STORM concrete overpack. Also attending the meeting were representatives of Private Fuel Storage (PFS), Northern States Power, Southern Nuclear, Shaw Pittman, Washington Nuclear, and the IbeX Group. A member of the public also attended this meeting. Holtec requested the meeting to discuss future licensing submittals and identified several license amendments and topical reports that will be submitted to the staff. The first of these will involve amendments to include fuel types needed by Commonwealth Edison and Pacific Gas and Electric. Topical reports to be submitted include the High Seismic Topical Report. At the meeting, a representative of PFS noted that they plan to submit a separate license amendment to speak to the seismic issues at the PFS facility (PFSF) site on the reservation of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians. The staff and Holtec also agreed to schedule a meeting in December to discuss the first request for additional information on the HI-STORM concrete overpack which is proposed for use at the PFSF.

Office of Administration
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Sidewalk Repair Project

DFS held a pre-construction meeting with the contractor selected to repair damaged areas of the concrete sidewalk around the perimeter of the White Flint complex and to restore the front entrance steps to OWFN. In accordance with the contractor's schedule all work is to be completed in 30 days, beginning November 19, 1998. The contractor will erect appropriate safety barriers around each construction location.

Restack Project

The current phase of Restack (10th floor) is completed and employees were relocated during the week of November 9, 1998. The 8th floor will be renovated next, with work scheduled to begin November 16, 1998 and to be completed by mid-January, 1999.

Workshop on Federal Civilian Agency Acquisition Workforce

On Thursday, November 12, 1998, DCPM staff attended a workshop on the Federal Civilian Agency Acquisition Workforce hosted by the Logistics Management Institute and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy. The workshop was attended by senior acquisition managers representing 20 Federal civilian and Defense agencies as well as senior acquisition managers in the private sector. The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum in which Federal Civilian Departments and Agencies, as well as the private industry groups, shared their best practices and lessons learned in providing training, policies, and programs to enhance the acquisition workforce's business management skills.

Chief Information Officer
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Freedom of Information and Privacy Act Requests received during
the 4-Day Period of November 6, 1998 - November 12, 1998:

Depleted uranium, named companies/individuals: Nextep
Environmental, Cimarron Corp, Chase Environmental Group.
(FOIA/PA 99-037)

U.S. hospital licensees listing. (FOIA/PA 99-038)

MLTS database. (FOIA/PA 99-039)

Office of Human Resources
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Arrivals		
SHANE, Raeann	Health Physicist	NMSS
Departures		
GAUNT, Andrew	Nuclear Engineer	NMSS
HUNKO, Karen	OFC Services Coordinator	RIV
NISSEN, Diana	Radiation Specialist	RIII

Office of Public Affairs
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Media Interest

The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported on leaking fuel rods at the Perry plant.

There was interest in the Cambridge, Massachusetts referendum on the M.I.T. research reactor.

Region IV is coordinating a TV interview on the Wolf Creek Y2K audit.

Press Releases	
Headquarters:	
98-204	NRC Prehearing Conference Scheduled for Yankee Nuclear Power Station
98-205	Status of NRC OSRE Program
98-206	NRC Makes Available Staff Recommendations on Cleanup Criteria for West Valley Site in New York
98-207	Note to Editors: ACRS meetings

Office of International Programs
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Visit of Government of Bangladesh Official

On November 9-10 and 12, 1998, Mr. M. Fazlur Rahman, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Government of Bangladesh, visited NRC headquarters to discuss with NRC staff his country's nuclear program. Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world and has few energy resources. It has modest uses of radiation sources, particularly in health, industry, agriculture, oil/gas exploration and in research and development areas, and regulation and tracking of these sources is an increasingly difficult issue. In addition to operating a 3 MW TRIGA Mark-II research reactor, the Government of Bangladesh is considering constructing a 300-600 Mwe nuclear power plant at Rooppur, in northern Bangladesh. As part of his two-week International Atomic Energy Agency Scientific Visitor Program-sponsored trip, Mr. Rahman will also be visiting the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital's Oncology Department in Philadelphia, and the Radiation Center at Oregon State University (Corvallis).

Trip to Russia

OIP staff member, Gordon Fowler, participated as part of a U.S. delegation team led by EPA to discuss proposals to develop spent fuel storage casks for ship-borne nuclear fuel assemblies. The meeting was attended principally by Nordic donors and Russian officials in Helsinki, Finland, and St. Petersburg, Russia. The meeting was a follow-on to discussions held between Chairman Jackson and EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator William Nitze following the September 1998 Gore - Chernomyrdin meeting. In a separate meeting in Moscow with GAN, the issue of certification of casks was discussed along with other topics, such as the annual program review meeting between NRC and GAN in early December. Mr. Fowler also received a briefing on GAN's review of the core conversion plan for the production reactors at Tomsk and Krasnyarsk.

Office of the Secretary
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Documents Released to Public	Date	Subject
Information Papers		
1. SECY-98-247	10/27/98	Risk-Informed, Performance-Based Fire Protection at Nuclear Power Plants
2. SECY-98-249	10/29/98	Weekly Information Report - Week Ending October 23, 1998

Commission Correspondence

1. Letter to Congress dated November 4, 1998 provides the quarterly report on the nondisclosure of safeguards information for the quarter beginning July 1 and extending through September 30, 1998
2. Letter to Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson dated November 4, 1998 concerns notification of intent to pursue an agreement with the NRC (incoming letter dated September 25, 1998 also released)
3. Letter to Amy Bondurant, U.S. Ambassador to the OECD, dated November 4, 1998 expresses appreciation for the time and effort that went into the USOECD Mission planning and support for the Chairman's visit to Paris to attend the 40th Anniversary of the OECD/NEA and to make a presentation at the regular session of the Steering Committee

Federal Register Notices Issued

1. Meeting notice of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, December 3-5, 1998
2. Meeting notice of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, Subcommittee on Planning and Procedures, December 2, 1998

Region I
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Region I Hosts Swedish Visitors to Exchange Reactor
Decommissioning Information

On Friday, November 6, 1998, NRC Region I staff met with five representatives from the Swedish Radiation Protection Institute (Statens strålskyddsinstitut (SSI)) to exchange information on the development of regulatory guidance for reactor decommissioning. SSI is one of two governmental organizations in Sweden whose duties are equivalent to the NRC. This interaction provided the opportunity for the SSI staff and Regional decommissioning inspectors to share practical experiences and lessons learned. The visitors had toured two decommissioning nuclear power plants within the Region earlier in the week.

Maine Yankee Public Meeting

Two meetings were held in Wiscasset, Maine, on November 9, 1998, to discuss decommissioning activities at the permanently shut down Maine Yankee Plant. An afternoon meeting was held between Maine Yankee and the NRC to discuss the involvement of Maine Yankee's Decommissioning Oversight Contractor, Stone and Webster Engineering Corporation. NRC staff and management from NRR, NMSS, and Region I Decommissioning & Laboratory Branch were in attendance. Stone and Webster explained how their procedures would be used at the site, how Stone and Webster will interact with Maine Yankee, staffing levels, and schedule. NRC managers stressed to Maine Yankee management their responsibility as the licensee to oversee their contractor. Approximately 35 members of the public observed this meeting and were provided an opportunity to ask questions at the conclusion.

An evening meeting was held by the Maine State Advisory Committee on Radiation to discuss Emergency Planning changes that had been approved by the NRC. The Committee, comprised of experts in the field of radiation, advises the Governor of Maine and various state committees. Maine Yankee representatives discussed the status of the Plant Emergency Preparedness Program, and NRC explained how Maine Yankee had requested and received an exemption to the Emergency Preparedness regulations, based on the decommissioning status of the plant. Approximately 60 citizens were in attendance, several whom spoke in support of (and one who dissented with) the reduced Emergency Preparedness Program at Maine Yankee.

November 13, 1998

ENCLOSURE P

Region II
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Tennessee Valley Authority - Sequoyah

On November 10, 1998, the NRC approved a Notice of Enforcement Discretion for Sequoyah Unit 2 involving the failure of one of four vital inverters providing 110 VAC instrumentation power. The equipment failure resulted in the trip of Unit 1 and would have potentially resulted in a forced shutdown of Unit 2 as required by the facility Technical Specifications. Subsequent to the NRC's approval, the subject power supply was returned to service without the need to invoke the discretion.

Region IV
Items of Interest
Week Ending November 13, 1998

Public Meeting with Arizona Public Service

On November 10, 1998, the Senior Vice President Production for Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, Arizona Public Service, and members of his staff, met with the Regional Administrator, regional staff members and members of the office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (via teleconference), in the Region IV office in Arlington, Texas. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Operations performance, challenges, and improvements at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station.

Arkansas Nuclear One (ANO) Drop-In Visit

The Regional Administrator and the Director, Division of Reactor Projects met with the ANO General Plant Manager and QA Manager during a drop-in visit on November 12, 1998. During this meeting, the ANO managers discussed general items of interest and recent plant performance, including Unit 2 steam generator replacement plans, upcoming outages, dry fuel storage, and recent good performance in Radiation Protection. The Regional Administrator discussed current items of NRC interest, including efforts to reduce NRC regulatory burden on licensees.