

February 6, 1996

SECY-96-026

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: James M. Taylor /s/
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: ANNUAL STATUS REPORT ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF NRC'S
REQUALIFICATION PROGRAM AND INITIAL OPERATOR LICENSING
EXAMINATIONS (WITS 8800098)

PURPOSE:

To inform the Commission of the status of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) licensed operator requalification program and the results of NRC's initial licensing examinations for reactor operator (RO) and senior reactor operator (SRO) applicants.

BACKGROUND:

The staff issued its first periodic report on the status of NRC's licensed operator requalification program on August 28, 1989, and continued to issue

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quarterly or semi-annual status reports through the end of calendar year 1991. In a staff requirements memorandum dated January 8, 1992, the Commission directed the staff to henceforth submit an annual report and combine the results of NRC's initial RO and SRO licensing examinations and requalification examinations. On February 25, 1992, the staff issued its first combined report, SECY-92-066, "Semi-Annual Status Report on the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Licensed Operator Examinations." On February 5, 1993, the staff issued its first combined annual report, SECY-93-027, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations." On February 18, 1994, the staff issued its annual report, SECY-94-039, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations," and discussed its new requalification program inspection process in support of an amendment to Part 55 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR) as described in SECY-93-333, "Final Amendments to 10 CFR Part 55 on Renewal of Licenses and Requalification Requirements for Licensed Operators." On February 17, 1995, the staff issued its annual report, SECY-95-042, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations," in which it discussed the results of the elimination of the 10 CFR Part 55 requirement that each licensed operator pass a comprehensive requalification written examination and an operating test conducted by the NRC during the term of each operator's 6-year license.

On March 24, 1995, the staff issued SECY-95-075, "Proposed Changes to the NRC Operator Licensing Program," in which it stated its intent to revise the manner in which the NRC administers the initial operator licensing program to allow greater participation by facility licensees, to eliminate contractor assistance in this area, and to adjust the degree of NRC involvement in facility requalification examinations. On August 15, 1995, the staff issued NRC Generic Letter 95-06, "Changes in the Operator Licensing Program," in order to (1) notify addressees of NRC's intent to change the operator licensing process to allow facility licensees to prepare draft written examinations and operating tests used by the NRC to determine the competence of operator license applicants at power reactor facilities and (2) solicit volunteers to participate in a pilot program that would evaluate and refine the new examination development process.

DISCUSSION:

NRC Requalification Examination and Inspection Summary for Fiscal Year 1995

During fiscal year 1995 (FY 95) the staff continued to monitor and implement FY 94 initiatives that enhanced the requalification examination and inspection process. It evaluated the licensed operator requalification programs at 58 power reactor facilities during FY 95 to verify that the programs could ensure the continued competence of individual licensed operators. All of the programs were evaluated using the process described in Inspection Procedure (IP) 71001, "Licensed Operator Requalification Program Evaluation." The staff

uses the IP to periodically evaluate the licensed operator requalification program at each power reactor facility. The staff may also conduct requalification examinations, as needed, when it loses confidence in a facility licensee's ability to conduct its own examinations or believes that the inspection process will not provide the needed insight; the staff did not conduct any requalification examinations during FY 95. As noted previously in SECY-95-042, the staff is no longer tracking the number of licensed operators and crews who pass or fail their requalification examinations. The attachment contains detailed results of the requalification program inspections at each facility inspected. A rating of SAT (satisfactory) for the requalification program inspections indicates that the staff did not elect to conduct NRC-administered requalification examinations because of any problems that may have been noted. The requalification program results are summarized in the following table.

Requalification Program Examination and/or Inspection Results for Fiscal Year 1995			
Element	Number Evaluated	SAT/UNSAT	Percent SAT
(NUREG-1021, Rev. 7) NRC Program Examinations	00	00/0	N/A
IP-71001 Program Inspections	58	58/0	100
Total	58	58/0	100

From FY 89 through the end of FY 94, the staff conducted 289 requalification program evaluations (246 programs involved examining 4290 operators utilizing NUREG-1021 and 43 programs utilizing inspection procedures) with an average pass rate for all operators examined of approximately 90 percent.

Requalification Examination Feedback

Feedback from licensees indicates that staff efforts to minimize undue requalification examination stress are succeeding. The staff continues to believe that the amendment to 10 CFR Part 55 to reduce direct NRC involvement in requalification examinations reduced examination stress because licensed operators are no longer required to pass an NRC-conducted requalification examination to renew their licenses.

Summary of Initial Examination Results

The staff is continuing to administer initial examinations to applicants for RO and SRO licenses at power and non-power reactor facilities. The following table gives the initial operator licensing examination results for FY 87 through FY 95.

Initial Examination Results										
Examination		Percent Passed During Fiscal Year								
		1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
RO	Written	89	90	90	92	93	92	92	92	90
	Operating	96	95	95	95	96	98	94	95	97
SRO	Written	91	91	94	94	97	98	97	97	93
	Operating	91	95	92	93	95	96	95	93	95

These results show that facility operator training programs continue to produce applicants who pass NRC's licensing examinations at a relatively high percentage rate.

During FY 95, the staff administered approximately 496 site-specific initial licensing examinations to RO and SRO applicants at power and non-power reactor facilities and approximately 325 generic fundamentals examinations to prospective license applicants at power reactor facilities.

Operator Licensing Program Improvements

The NRC is continuing its efforts to improve the operator licensing program. The staff has implemented or is considering a number of initiatives that will enhance the initial licensing and requalification examination processes. The following improvements were either completed during FY 95 or are in progress:

- (1) The NRC is considering a possible change to the operator licensing process so that facility licensees may prepare draft written examinations and operating tests for review and administration by the NRC. The proposed change is part of NRC's continuing efforts to streamline the functions of the Federal Government consistent with Administration initiatives and to accommodate anticipated resource reductions, including the elimination of contractor support in the operator licensing area.

From October 1995 through March 1996, the staff is conducting a voluntary pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed examination process; 21 facility licensees are participating. The facility licensees prepare the pilot examinations in accordance with the existing procedures in NUREG-1021, "Operator Licensing Examiner Standards," with supplemental instructions provided by the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR). The NRC staff remains actively engaged in the examination process to ensure that acceptable levels of effectiveness, objectivity, and independence are maintained. NRC examiners review the proposed examinations in detail to verify that they conform with the applicable guidelines, they work directly with licensee representatives to make whatever changes are necessary to bring the examinations into conformance with NRC examination standards, they continue to administer and grade the operating tests, and they review the written examinations after they are graded by the facility licensee. The NRC continues to issue or deny operator licenses on the basis of the qualifications and competence of the license applicants.

In parallel with the pilot examination process, NRR will issue for public comment the draft examination procedures which would permit implementation of the revised examination process. Following the completion of the pilot examinations in early April, 1996, NRR will

evaluate the results of the pilot examinations and the public comments received on the draft examination procedures. NRR will then present the results and the staff's recommendations to the Commission for consideration of whether the examination process should be changed.

- (2) The NRC issued Revision 1 of the "Knowledge and Abilities Catalog for Nuclear Power Plant Operators: Pressurized Water Reactors" (NUREG-1122) and the "Knowledge and Abilities Catalog for Nuclear Power Plant Operators: Boiling Water Reactors" (NUREG-1123), which were originally published in 1985 and 1986. The revised catalogs incorporate evolutionary changes in licensed operators' tasks and the operator licensing program.
- (3) To better allocate inspection resources and to bring the NRC inspection frequency in line with typical licensee scheduling practices, the NRC changed the frequency of the requalification program inspections (IP 71001) from once every systematic assessment of licensee performance cycle to once every 24 months (i.e., the maximum requalification cycle period permitted by 10 CFR Part 55). This change is not expected to have a significant effect on the staff's ability to oversee the facility licensees' requalification programs.

CONCLUSION:

The staff believes that NRC's initial and requalification examination and inspection programs continue to be effective methods for assessing operator competence in performing licensed duties and for evaluating the adequacy of facility requalification programs. The staff also believes that its continuing effort to improve these programs are necessary and fully consistent with the Administration's streamlining initiatives.

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Attachment: Status Report on the NRC
Requalification Program - Fiscal Year 1995

STATUS REPORT ON THE NRC REQUALIFICATION PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 1995

Facility Evaluated -----	Inspection Procedure Performed -----	Program SAT [†] /UNSAT -----	Date -----
Waterford 3	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT [†]	9-94
Seabrook	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Ginna	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Millstone 1	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Catawba	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Surry	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
McGuire	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Grand Gulf	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Braidwood	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-94
Millstone 3	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Calvert Cliffs	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Nine Mile Pt 2	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Browns Ferry	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Big Rock Point	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Clinton	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Prairie Island	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
WNP 2	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-94
Oyster Creek	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	12-94
Crystal River	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	12-94
Duane Arnold	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	12-94
Fermi	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	12-94
Susquehanna	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	1-95

See footnote at end of table.

ATTACHMENT

Facility Evaluated	Inspection Procedure Performed	Program SAT [†] /UNSAT	Date
Turkey Point	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	1-95
Cook	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	1-95
River Bend	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	1-95
Perry	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	2-95
Dresden	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	2-95
Point Beach	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	2-95
Peach Bottom	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-95
Vermont Yankee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-95
Monticello	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-95
Palisades	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-95
Palo Verde	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-95
Salem	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	4-95
Kewaunee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	4-95
Oconee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-95
Summer	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-95
Comanche Peak	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-95
Diablo Canyon	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-95
Nine Mile Pt. 1	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95
Farley	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95
Callaway	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95
LaSalle	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95
Byron	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95
Zion	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95

See footnote at end of table.

Facility Evaluated	Inspection Procedure Performed	Program SAT [†] /UNSAT	Date
Arkansas	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-95
Maine Yankee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	7-95
Pilgrim	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	8-95
Brunswick	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	8-95
Robinson	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	8-95
Braidwood	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	8-95
Ginna	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
Limerick	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
Haddam Neck	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
North Anna	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
McGuire	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
Quad Cities	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
Point Beach	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95
Beaver Valley	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-95

[†] Program evaluation was not included in FY 94 report.

* A program rating of SAT (satisfactory) indicates that the NRC staff did not elect to conduct NRC administered requalification examinations for cause as a result of any problems that may have been noted.