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

December 15, 1999

Mr. J. H. Swailes  
Vice President of Nuclear Energy  
Nebraska Public Power District  
P. O. Box 98  
Brownville, NE 68321

SUBJECT: SITE-SPECIFIC WORKSHEETS FOR USE IN THE NRC'S SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION PROCESS

Dear Mr. Swailes:

As a participant in the Pilot Plant Review of the revised reactor oversight program, you are aware of the NRC's efforts to develop a Significance Determination Process (SDP) for use by the NRC to provide a risk characterization to an inspection finding. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the enclosed Risk-Informed Inspection Notebook which contains site-specific SDP worksheets that inspectors will be using to risk characterize inspection findings. The SDP is discussed in more detail below.

On January 8, 1999, the NRC staff described to the Commission plans and recommendations to improve the reactor oversight process. These recommendations were contained in SECY-99-007, "Recommendations for Reactor Oversight Process Improvements" (available on the NRC's Web Site <[www.nrc.gov/NRC/COMMISSION/SECYS/index.html](http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/COMMISSION/SECYS/index.html)>). The new process, developed with stakeholder involvement, is designed around a risk-informed framework, which is intended to focus both the NRC's and licensee's attention and resources on those issues of more risk significance.

The performance assessment portion of the new process involves the use of both licensee-submitted performance indicator data and inspection findings that have been appropriately categorized based on their risk significance. In order to properly categorize an inspection finding, the NRC has developed the SDP. This process was also described to the Commission in SECY-99-007A, "Recommendations for Reactor Oversight Process Improvements (Follow-up to SECY-99-007)," dated March 22, 1999, also available on the above-noted Web Site.

The SDP for power operations involves evaluating an inspection finding's impact on the plant's capability to limit the frequency of initiating events; ensure the availability, reliability, and capability of mitigating systems; and ensure the integrity of the fuel cladding, reactor coolant system, and containment barriers. As described in SECY-99-007A, the SDP involves the use of three tables. Table 1 is the estimated likelihood for initiating event occurrence during the degraded period. Table 2 describes how the significance is determined based on remaining mitigation system capabilities, and Table 3 provides the bases for the failure probabilities associated with the remaining mitigation equipment and strategies.

As a result of the recent Pilot Plant review effort, the NRC has determined that site-specific risk data is needed in order to provide a repeatable determination of the significance of an issue. Therefore, the NRC has contracted with Brookhaven National Lab to develop site-specific

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worksheets to be used in the SDP review. These enclosed worksheets were developed based on your Individual Plant Examination (IPE) submittal that was requested by Generic Letter 88-20. The NRC plans to use this site-specific information in evaluating the significance of issues identified at your facility. It is recognized that the IPE utilized during this effort may not contain current information. Therefore, the NRC conducted a site visit to your facility and discussed appropriate changes with your staff. These changes have been incorporated. We are not requesting written comments on the NRC's work product enclosed with this letter.

If there is a need to conduct additional follow-up visits, we will coordinate our efforts through your licensing or risk organizations as appropriate. If you have any questions, please contact me at 301-415-3053 or ljb@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Lawrence J. Burkhart, Project Manager, Section 1  
Project Directorate IV & Decommissioning  
Division of Licensing Project Management  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-298

Enclosure: Risk-Informed Inspection Notebook

cc w/encl: See next page

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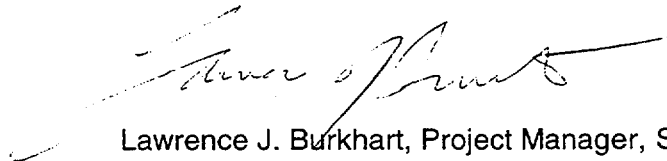
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Sincerely,



Lawrence J. Burkhart, Project Manager, Section 1  
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Enclosure: Risk-Informed Inspection Notebook

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September 28, 1999