

NEI/ILOTF National Workshop Questions 2/19 – 2/20/2003

Note: Comments and additional information related to each question are [bracketed] and clarifying information that was not discussed during the workshop is in *italics*.

Written Examination:

- Regarding the cut scores for direct senior reactor operators (SROs): What would happen if a direct SRO scored an 80% overall but got less than 70% on the reactor operator (RO) portion? [The Focus Group (FG) noted that passing all 25 questions in the SRO portion and 55 of the 75 RO questions (for an overall passing grade of 80%) would still result in a 73% on the RO portion. Therefore, a candidate could never pass the examination overall and fail the RO portion.]
- Regarding waivers for upgrade SRO applicants to take the 25-question written exam: Does the individual have to be current in the requalification program when starting the class or at the time that the waiver is requested? [One of the obvious issues would be the logistics of keeping an upgrade applicant's RO license "current" through ongoing requal program participation while also in an upgrade training program.]
- How do we fully test the "A2" knowledge and ability (K/A) category (which tests the ability to predict the impacts of malfunctions and use procedures to correct, control, or mitigate the consequences of those malfunctions) given that the written examination is fundamentally a closed-reference exam? [*There is no intent to increase the use of open-reference questions on the SRO-only examination. Applicants should be able to answer questions requiring familiarity with a procedure's objectives and steps and the affected systems' design features without the use of references.*]
- Regarding the distribution of SRO-only questions as listed on form ES-401-1: Is it acceptable to test only on the "A2" and "G" categories? [The NRC staff noted that this would be acceptable and expected. A representative of the FG asked attendees to provide feedback on how to deal with these types of issues.]
- Can the RO and SRO-only portions of the written examination be administered on different days, thereby giving an applicant a total of 9 hours to take the exam. [The NRC staff noted that time extensions are permitted per ES-402 if the applicants cannot complete the examination within the allotted time.]
- Regarding the overlap between the RO and SRO-only portions of the exam: Is it acceptable to randomly arrive at 2 questions on diesel generators on the RO exam and an additional diesel generator question on the SRO exam? [*The combined examination should avoid testing more than two topics from a given system or evolution unless they relate to a plant specific priority.*]
- Would it be acceptable for an RO candidate to take the entire written exam and "bank" the SRO-only portion so that he/she would only have to take an operating test when upgrading their license at a later time? [The NRC staff noted that this

had been considered at one time but was rejected due to concerns about appeal rights and other issues.]

- Regarding Attachment 2 of ES-401: Why does Item 1 identify K/A 2.4.30 among those that can not be excluded from the random selection process when the RO importance rating (2.2) is below the minimum cutoff for testing (i.e., 2.5)? [*The K/As identified in Item 1 include all the system-generic K/As from the original K/A catalogs without regard to their importance ratings. Note that the SRO importance rating for the K/A in question is 3.6 and K/As with an importance rating less than 2.5 can be sampled based on site-specific priorities.*]
- Regarding the use of NUREG-1021, Revision 9: If a facility has an exam in March of 2004, would it be a Revision 9 exam or something else? [The NRC staff noted that whatever revision is agreed upon in the 120-day letter, which would likely be issued while the voluntary trial period is still in effect, is what will be used. A representative of the FG noted that the industry and NRC effectively dealt with this type of issue with Draft and Final Supplement 1 to Revision 8.]

Operating Test:

- Regarding administrative job performance measures (JPMs): What is the appropriate number of alternate path JPMs in the administrative area since they are allowed to be utilized? [The NRC staff answered that there is no change from Revision 8 of NUREG-1021; although the “alternate path” terminology does not strictly apply to administrative JPMs, there is no limit on how many of those JPMs might contain errors to be addressed by the applicant. Facility licensees can provide feedback to the FG.]
- Regarding the number of JPMs: Which spread of JPMs does a direct SRO have to take – the RO version of 11 system and 4 administrative JPMs or the old direct SRO requirement of 10 and 5? [The correct number is 10 system and 5 administrative JPMs.]
- What happens if an SRO applicant misses 4 administrative JPMs but gets all the system JPMs correct, thereby failing overall with a 73%; can the applicant retake only the administrative JPMs? What if an applicant gets all the administrative tasks right but ends up failing overall based solely on system errors? [*According to the grading system in Draft Revision 9, the applicant, in both cases, would fail overall and have to retake the entire walk-through.*]
- When grading the simulator operating test for direct SRO applicants, will examiners use only the SRO form or the RO form as well for control board operations? [The NRC staff noted that the scenarios are graded as a set and that the SRO form, which covers control board operations as competency 3, will be used even if the applicant fills an RO position during one of the scenarios.]
- Regarding the grading of non-critical errors on the simulator test: How will human performance areas such as self-checking be graded? Will an error count if the applicant self-corrects it? [The NRC staff noted that even if a facility has a procedure for self-checking, it is often difficult for an examiner to confirm whether a candidate did a self-check; therefore, it is most likely that the candidate

- will be given the benefit of the doubt. *If a candidate averts actually making an error through the self-check process, then it would not count as an error; however, an error that is committed would not be voided even if the candidate identifies and corrects the error through the self-check process.*]
- Along the same subject, how will 3-way communications be graded? [The NRC staff noted that it is easier to grade communications (since the examiner can hear them) so, therefore, a candidate could be charged with a non-critical error for failed communications. However, this alone would not result in a candidate failing overall since it is only one rating factor on Form ES-303-3/4. *Miscommunications that are corrected as a result of the 3-way communications process are successful and would not count as errors if no incorrect actions are actually performed.*]
 - Regarding Form ES-303-4: Item 1.c (the SRO rating factor on understanding plant and system operation) should be mandatory for upgrade SRO applicants or “not applicable” for direct SROs. [This was a written question submitted to the FG after the meeting; the author noted that NOT OBSERVED (N/O) should not be used in this case in order to preserve the option for two real N/Os elsewhere on the test. *Rating factors that are optional would not count toward the N/O limit.*]
 - Will repetitive errors be counted as multiple hits? Why use the same non-critical error system in all competencies when some competencies (communications) have hundreds of opportunities for error and others have very few?
 - Regarding the grading of “soft” skills: If a utility has defined higher standards for some soft skills than other utilities, would that utility’s candidates, in effect, be graded to a higher standard? [The NRC staff acknowledged that this might be the case but emphasized that many soft skills do not necessarily fall in to one of the rating factors, so, therefore, would not be graded at all.]
 - Regarding the candidate briefing sheet (Appendix E): Please clarify the issue of candidates discussing exam content. [The NRC staff noted that this policy is essentially unchanged from Revision 8 of NUREG-1021 and that candidates should generally not talk among themselves until the end of the week, after the exit briefing. The only exception is that members of the same simulator crew may discuss their scenarios when they are complete. The FG noted that, realistically, candidates should be able to talk among themselves at the end of each day, since a repeat of exam material from day to day is prohibited by NUREG 1021. However, the NRC responded that the policy is intended to protect test integrity and fairness by preventing candidates from focusing their study by eliminating test materials that have already been used.]
 - Concerning Form ES-301-3, the operating test quality checklist: The 30% limit on repeatability of walk-through test items from the last exam is not explained in the text and seems unnecessary. [*This item is explained in Section D.2.a of ES-301 and is required to maintain test integrity.*]
 - Regarding Form ES-201-2: The form indicates that Item 3.a(3) is not applicable to NRC-developed exams, but it should also not be applicable to facility-developed exams. [This was a written question submitted to the FG; the author noted that it led to more people than necessary being on the security agreement on independently developed audit and NRC exams to ensure compliance. *The NRC*

staff believes that this item is necessary to maintain the integrity of facility-prepared walk-through tests because there is no random or systematic selection of test items that would preclude excessive repetition of audit test items. If the NRC develops the test, our examiners do not always have access to the facility's audit test and independence is assured.]

Miscellaneous Changes:

- Regarding the generic fundamentals examination (GFE) 2-year shelf life (i.e., how long it is good for): If a non-licensed operator takes the GFE, passes it, and then a year later enrolls in a license training program, would he need to take the GFE again? [The NRC staff noted that the 2-year GFE shelf-life, which would only affect applicants who are not enrolled in a requalification training program that maintains proficiency in the GFE topics, is a preliminary staff position that was incorporated in Draft Revision 9 of NUREG-1021 to generate discussion in advance of a formal policy in Final Revision 9. An FG representative explained that NRR has already been given an example of an individual who passed the GFE, failed his site-specific exam 15 months later, and then enrolled in another license class a total of 24 months after passing the first GFE – because of 15 to 18 month class lengths, this is a very realistic scenario that needs to be addressed.]
- Regarding the GFE 2-year shelf life: If Revision 8 of NUREG-1021 is used in 2003, would the 2-year shelf life for GFE still apply? [The NRC staff noted that if the shelf life issue is the only thing preventing a facility from using Draft Revision 9, please do not hesitate to approach the NRC with your particular situation. The NRC staff will assess the merits of such requests on a case-by-case basis during the Revision 9 trial period.]
- If a facility hires an operator from another facility, will they have to assess the other facility's requalification program to ensure it maintained the operator's proficiency in the GFE topics?
- Regarding the GFE schedule in 2004: The NRC staff indicated that December, which has been suggested as one of the four new dates, may be difficult for the NRC to accommodate and asked the industry to consider a different month, such as November.
- Regarding the security agreement in ES-601: Will the requalification examination security agreement be revised to match the wording on Form ES-201-3 (the initial examination security agreement)?