

IN RESPONSE, PLEASE
REFER TO: M960618A

July 23, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR: James M. Taylor
Executive Director for Operations

FROM: John C. Hoyle, Secretary /s/

SUBJECT: STAFF REQUIREMENTS - BRIEFING ON STATUS OF
NRC OPERATOR LICENSING INITIAL EXAMINATION
PILOT PROCESS, TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 1996,
COMMISSIONERS' CONFERENCE ROOM, ONE WHITE
FLINT NORTH, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND (OPEN TO
PUBLIC ATTENDANCE)

The Commission was briefed on the results of the pilot program that allowed NRC licensees to develop and write operator licensing exams with NRC review and approval.

The Commission requested that the staff develop a detailed rulemaking plan to justify changes that may be necessary to 10 CFR Part 55, Operators' Licenses, to require that power reactor facility licensees draft the operator licensing examinations in accordance with NUREG-1021. Along with the rulemaking plan, the staff should provide the following items:

1. A thorough discussion that addresses the potential impact of the proposed operator licensing rule on licensees and why this impact on nuclear facilities does not constitute a backfit.
2. A discussion of the degree of acceptance by facility licensees of this new approach to operator licensing.
3. A comprehensive discussion of the pros and cons, and vulnerabilities associated with proceeding with the operator licensing plan industry wide. The review should include, but not be limited to, a review of the impact on licensee

and NRC resources, the potential effects on reactor safety, the impact of proposed NUREG-1021 revisions, potential public perceptions, and concerns raised by staff members with this approach.

4. The results of initial operator license exams that have been given both under the pilot program and under the present program since SECY-96-123 was prepared. The results should also discuss any trends observed.
5. A discussion of industry comments received on draft NUREG-1021, Revision 8, an explanation of the staff's response to those comments, and a justification for subsequent proposed changes to the operator licensing program.
6. An explanation of enhancements to the new licensing examination process resulting from the review and feedback from the pilot program results.

(EDO)

(SECY Suspense: 9/15/96)

The Commission does not intend to make a decision on implementation of the revised examination process on an industry wide basis until the rulemaking plan and responses to the additional items listed above are reviewed. Pending a final Commission decision on the revised process the staff should continue the pilot program. It is anticipated that the Commission will receive the rulemaking plan promptly and the staff should not plan to continue the pilot program beyond July 1997.

cc: Chairman Jackson
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Dicus
OGC
OCA
OIG
Office Directors, Regions, ACRS, ACNW, ASLBP (via E-Mail)
PDR - Advance
DCS - P1-24