

July 24, 2003

MEMORANDUM TO: Timothy J. McGinty, Section Chief
Coordination Section
Division of Incident Response Operations
Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response

FROM: Robert J. Stransky, Emergency Response Coordinator */RA/*
Coordination Section
Division of Incident Response Operations
Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF MEETING HELD ON JUNE 25, 2003, WITH THE
NUCLEAR ENERGY INSTITUTE REGARDING THE
INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR EVENT SCALE

On June 25, 2003, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff held a public meeting with representatives of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) at the NRC Headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss comments regarding the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) provided by NEI in a letter dated May 29, 2003. A representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) involved with the INES was also in attendance at the meeting. A list of attendees is attached (Attachment 1).

NEI representatives made a presentation describing industry concerns regarding the potential for minor events involving fuel cladding issues to be rated overly significant using the criteria described in the *INES User's Manual*. Incorrect characterization of such an event could result in the misinterpretation of a relatively minor event. NEI identified that the percentage of fuel melt or percentage of core inventory released are not parameters that can be measured. INES significance levels for on-site criteria are based on these parameters. NEI proposed that the coolant activity level could provide a timely and quantitative estimate of fuel damage. NEI's proposal to clarify the INES rating criteria using coolant activity measurements is described in the attached handout (Attachment 2). During the meeting, NEI also provided a white paper entitled "Nuclear Energy Institute International Event Scale Meeting, June 25, 2003" (Attachment 3).

The staff then discussed other issues contained in the NEI letter dated May 29, 2003. NEI raised a concern that an NRC licensee could be negatively impacted if the staff were to issue an INES report without providing the licensee with an opportunity for review and comment on the report. The NRC agrees that it is important to keep licensees aware of staff activities which might impact them. Both NRC and the industry seek accurate reporting of events and appropriate updates as conditions and information change. The staff expects to interact with licensees, where appropriate, during the development of INES reports.

NEI also provided a comment that the staff's two business day reporting goal for INES reports is too short and is inconsistent with other rating systems. The actual INES reporting goal, as described in the INES User's Manual, is 24 hours. The NRC adopted a two business day goal in order to provide an opportunity to gather additional information regarding the event and to coordinate with affected licensees. The staff emphasized that INES was developed to be a communications tool and, as such, the staff believes that timely dissemination of information is very important.

The IAEA representative explained that there was a misunderstanding by the industry regarding terminology; "core inventory," as used in the *INES User's Manual* refers to fuel pellets, not a fuel gap release, as interpreted by the industry. At the conclusion of the meeting, the IAEA representative expressed interest in possibly incorporating the coolant activity criteria into the INES rating methodology. He stated that he had received a similar request from the World Association of Nuclear Operators. All parties expressed interest in further dialog regarding the development of INES.

Attachments: 1. List of Attendees dated June 25, 2003
2. International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) Meeting Handout dated June 25, 2003
3. Nuclear Energy Institute White Paper dated June 25, 2003

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*See previous concurrence.

OFFICE	NSIR/DIRO/ERC	NSIR/DIRO/SC	D:DIRO:NSIR
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DATE	7/21/03	7/23/03	7/24/03