

October 21, 2003

MEMORANDUM TO: Chairman Diaz
Commissioner McGaffigan
Commissioner Merrifield

FROM: William D. Travers /RA/
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON POTENTIAL FUTURE OPERATIONAL SAFETY REVIEW
TEAM AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY REVIEW TEAM
MISSIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Commission with the current information on potential future International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) and International Regulatory Review Team (IRRT) missions to the United States (U.S.). In memoranda to the Commission dated November 19, 2002, December 3, 2002, and March 6, 2003, I provided similar updates.

With regard to an OSART mission to the U.S., the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) continues to engage licensees to identify a candidate to host a 2005 OSART mission. To date, a candidate has not been identified.

On April 17, 2003, the staff hosted a plenary session at the Regulatory Information Conference (RIC) to discuss international experience with OSART missions. This session included representatives from the international community, IAEA, and from the U.S. nuclear industry. The IAEA and industry presentations on North Anna's OSART were, in general, positive. However, according to the licensee for North Anna, among those issues to be considered when hosting an OSART are the intrusive impact on management resources and the culture-based (not performance-based) nature of the review.

To offset the additional burden associated with hosting an OSART, the staff will appropriately modify the Reactor Oversight Program's (ROP) baseline inspection program at the site where duplication and overlap with the OSART assessment can be established. In addition, as an incentive for licensees, INPO has indicated that they will substitute the OSART mission for an annual INPO assessment.

With regard to an IRRT mission to the U.S., the staff met with Mr. Dominique Delattre, IAEA Head of Regulatory Activities, on June 26, 2003, to discuss the IRRT service and gained a better understanding of the resources involved. While an IRRT mission may be of some benefit to the NRC, the staff estimates that significant resources would be expended to support the mission. These staff resources would need to be drawn from other, higher priority, tasks. Therefore, the staff does not support an IRRT mission to the U.S. at this time. In addition, the staff believes that it would be prudent to gain more international experience, such as through the next meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and continued NRC staff participation on IRRT missions, before making further recommendations regarding an IRRT mission to the U.S.

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With regard to IRRT and OSART missions abroad, the staff continues to conclude that participation by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff on IRRT and OSART missions supports NRC's goals in the international arena, provides unique individual professional development opportunities, and contributes to NRC's safety mission.

The staff will inform the Commission when significant new information becomes available regarding an OSART mission to the U.S.

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