

August 24, 2007

Mr. Amir Shahkarami
Engineering Nuclear Generation Division
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

SUBJECT: DIGITAL INSTRUMENTATION AND CONTROL PROJECT PLAN NUCLEAR
ENERGY INSTITUTE COMMENTS

Dear Mr. Shahkarami:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the July 24, 2007, letter from the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) providing industry comments on the Digital Instrumentation and Control (I&C) Project Plan (the Plan).

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is committed to refining the regulatory and licensing guidance and procedures to ensure a stable, predictable and effective regulatory process for review of applications to utilize digital I&C technology in safety systems at operating and new nuclear power reactors and fuel cycle facilities. Through the NRC Digital I&C Steering Committee and the associated Task Working Groups (TWGs), the staff will develop Interim Staff Guidance (ISG) necessary to provide licensees and applicants with clear guidance to prepare and submit applications to utilize digital technology. The Plan developed by the Steering Committee and TWGs involved extensive public interactions and input from industry representatives and other public stakeholders.

Regarding the first two comments in the NEI letter concerning the schedule to issue interim guidance, the Plan will ensure clear guidance is available in key technical areas for near-term applications and will meet the Commission's expectations of the staff. The Steering Committee and TWGs will remain in effect to assure refinement of the ISGs as appropriate and plan to incorporate the interim guidance into the NRC's regulatory infrastructure. As discussed in our August 20, 2007, public meeting, the Steering Committee is refining the schedule for long-term deliverables and seeks industry input to finalize those deliverables and schedules.

Regarding the comment on the Licensing Process TWG and associated section of the Plan, the Steering Committee is encouraged by the industry's progress in defining specific concerns as discussed during a public TWG meeting on August 15, 2007. We look forward to continuing refinement of problem statements that can be addressed through the work of this TWG.

The principal purpose of the Steering Committee and the Plan is to develop interim guidance to ensure the quality and uniformity of staff reviews and to present a well-defined base to evaluate applications to use digital I&C technology. The development of ISGs supports the digital I&C review process by providing timely updated guidance to applicants and staff reviewers, as well as information to stakeholders. Approved ISGs will serve as a bridge and will be used by staff to review digital I&C applications until the ISGs are refined as necessary and incorporated into future revisions of appropriate regulatory documents. The Steering Committee appreciates the continued contributions of industry representatives to develop and refine regulatory guidance supporting the application of digital technology of operating and new nuclear power reactors and fuel cycle facilities.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 301-415-1274.

Sincerely,

/RA/

John A. Grobe, Associate Director
for Engineering and Safety Systems
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

cc: See next page

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