

POLICY ISSUE INFORMATION

May 21, 2012

SECY-12-0074

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: Eric J. Leeds, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SUBJECT: SCHEDULING A FOLLOW-UP INTEGRATED REGULATORY REVIEW
SERVICE (IRRS) MISSION IN THE UNITED STATES

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this paper is to inform the Commission of the staff's intention to request a follow-up Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission in 2014. This paper does not address a new commitment.

BACKGROUND:

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) IRRS program sends teams of specialized technical and regulatory experts to perform peer reviews of nuclear regulatory bodies around the world. Missions are conducted at the request of the host country and are organized into topical modules. Countries have flexibility in determining the scope of the missions. In October 2010, the United States hosted an IRRS mission focused on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) operating reactor program. The IAEA's guidelines for IRRS missions suggest that countries request a follow-up mission within 18-24 months; however, 3 years is more typical considering IAEA resources, the number of missions being performed, and the need to provide sufficient time for the host country to address the mission's findings.

DISCUSSION:

The following provides information about the benefits of inviting a follow-up IRRS mission and the staff's high-level plans for hosting the mission.

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**SECY NOTE: THIS SECY PAPER WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC 5 WORKING
DAYS AFTER DISPATCH OF THE LETTER.**

Benefits of a Follow-up IRRS Mission

The United States played an important role in the advancement of the IRRS program by leading by example in hosting a mission in 2010. The mission was beneficial to the NRC in requiring the staff to undertake a rigorous self-assessment, which identified a number of potential areas for improvement that were elaborated upon during the IRRS team's 2-week visit. In part, because of the willing participation of major nuclear regulatory bodies, more countries that need international guidance to improve their programs are requesting and hosting IRRS missions.

Follow-up missions are important because they provide countries with an opportunity to demonstrate their efforts to address the IRRS recommendations. This is similar to the review of country challenges at the triennial Convention of Nuclear Safety (CNS) Review Meetings. In addition, the Operational Safety Review Team missions that IAEA conducts of nuclear plant operators at the plant site also have follow-up missions. The staff believes that peer review programs are more effective with this demonstration review step.

The IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety (Action Plan), which was developed in response to the Fukushima accident in Japan, encourages countries to avail themselves of peer review services and invite follow-up missions to demonstrate progress in areas in which improvement was recommended. In contributing to the development of the Action Plan, the United States has been a strong proponent of the IAEA's peer review programs and of transparency in publicly sharing their results. The Fukushima accident also prompted the IAEA to include additional review specifically to address how regulatory bodies have identified and addressed lessons learned due to the accident. This new review area has been deployed in several missions so far, including the Republic of Korea and a follow-up mission to Canada.

The staff believes that the follow-up IRRS mission should have the same scope as the original mission, with the addition of the new reviews pertaining specifically to Fukushima lessons learned.

From a policy perspective, the staff believes it is important for the United States to request and schedule a follow-up IRRS mission to further demonstrate its commitment to the program, and through example, to encourage other countries to follow suit. The staff believes that the Extraordinary Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which will take place at the IAEA from August 27-31, 2012, would be an appropriate venue for announcing that the United States has officially requested an IAEA IRRS follow-up mission. The CNS currently has 74 contracting party countries.

Inviting a follow-up IRRS mission will have the following benefits:

- Provide additional demonstration of U.S. support for peer review programs,
- Encourage other countries to invite a follow-up mission,
- Demonstrate support for IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety,

- Demonstrate the NRC's approach to the IRRS mission recommendations and suggestions, and
- Provide an in-depth international senior regulator peer review of the NRC's response to Fukushima.

Hosting Follow-up IRRS Mission

Follow-up missions typically consist of a smaller team, mainly composed of team members from the original mission to promote continuity. The staff estimates that a follow-up mission focused on the NRC's actions to address the original mission's recommendations and suggestions and on the NRC's actions in response to the Fukushima accident should have approximately eight to ten members for one week. In addition, there will be a preparatory meeting for three members for one day.

The NRC staff will form three teams for the follow-up mission, as for the original mission. These teams will be a technical team led by the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, a liaison team led by the Office of International Programs, and a communications team led by the Office of Public Affairs. Additional NRC offices will also provide support for follow-up mission activities concerning information technology, conference meeting space, and ensuring a complete NRC response on the follow-up mission review areas.

The follow-up mission will only take place at NRC headquarters and will not involve travel to a region or plant site. Safeguards information will not be discussed with the follow-up team.

The staff will provide a status of its preparation activities and progress to address the mission recommendations and suggestions to the Commission within one year.

Resources

The staff has been planning for a follow-up IRRS mission and estimates that it will involve the following resources:

- fiscal year (FY) 2013: 1.7 full-time equivalents (FTEs), and
- FY 2014: 1.44 FTE.

The staff's budgeted international resources can support this effort.

CONCLUSION:

The staff's planned actions include the following:

- (1) Request a follow-up IRRS mission in the United States in 2014 (draft letter enclosed).
- (2) Inform the Commission of the status of the staff's preparation activities and progress to address the 2010 mission recommendations and suggestions within one year.

COORDINATION:

The Office of the General Counsel has reviewed this paper and has no legal objection. The Office of International Programs has reviewed this paper and concurs. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this paper and concurs.

/RA by Bruce A. Boger for/

Eric J. Leeds, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
Draft Request Letter

COORDINATION:

The Office of the General Counsel has reviewed this paper and has no legal objection. The Office of International Programs has reviewed this paper and concurs. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this paper and concurs.

/RA by Bruce A. Boger for/

Eric J. Leeds, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
Draft Request Letter

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SECY-012 *via email

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OFFICIAL RECORD COPY

Mr. Denis Flory
Deputy Director General
Department of Nuclear Safety and Security
International Atomic Energy Agency
Wagramer Strasse 5, P.O. Box 100
A-1400 Vienna, Austria

Dear Deputy Director General Flory:

I am writing to inform you that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) formally requests the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to conduct a follow-up integrated regulatory review service (IRRS) mission in the United States in 2014. The NRC hosted an IRRS mission in October 2010 focused on the operating power reactor program. The follow-up mission will focus on the NRC's actions in response to the recommendations and suggestions contained in the October 2010 mission report, and on the NRC's actions in response to the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant site.

The NRC contact for coordinating the details of the follow-up mission is Bruce A. Boger, Deputy Director for Reactor Safety Programs, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

The NRC is pleased to participate in the IRRS program and to provide continued support to other IRRS missions.

Sincerely,

Gregory B. Jaczko

ENCLOSURE