

Mr. Ralph E. Beedle, Senior Vice President
and Chief Nuclear Officer, Nuclear Generation
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006-3708

November 4, 1996

Dear Mr. Beedle:

I would like to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated October 10, 1996, in which you expressed a number of concerns regarding the development of the graded quality assurance (QA) initiative. In general, you state that the pace of development is too slow, there are excessive and repetitive staff questions and requests for information, and the staff focus is on the details of implementation rather than on the safety significance of the licensee's QA changes.

As you are aware, the staff has been working with the three volunteer plant licensees to develop graded QA programs that include techniques for categorizing the various plant components into levels of safety significance, and to identify quality program elements appropriate to each level. The rationale utilized for this effort has been consistent with the the four essential elements originally described in a letter to the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) dated June 15, 1994 and is subject to the constraints imposed by applicable regulations. In parallel, the staff has devoted considerable effort to the development of both a regulatory guide and a standard review plan to provide industry guidance on graded QA.

As requested in your letter, the staff is available to discuss the above matters in a public meeting at a mutually acceptable time. Please contact Ms. Melinda Malloy at (301) 415-1178 to set an agenda for discussion and to make arrangements for this meeting.

Sincerely,
Original signed by: Ashok C. Thadani
Ashok Thadani, Acting Deputy Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Project No. 689
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cc: Mr. Thomas Tipton, Vice President
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