

February 7, 1997

DRS

Mr. Bruce D. Kenyon
President and Chief Executive Officer
Northeast Nuclear Energy Company
c/o Mr. Terry Harpster
P. O. Box 128
Waterford, Connecticut 06385-0128

SUBJECT: INITIAL OPERATOR LICENSING EXAMINATION REPORT NO. 50-245/96-12

Dear Mr. Kenyon:

During the period of December 2 - 6, 1996, the NRC administered initial examinations to seven employees of your company who had applied for licenses to operate Millstone Unit 1. At the conclusion of the examinations, the preliminary findings were discussed with Mr. Haynes and members of your staff.

Six of the seven applicants failed the examinations. One applicant passed the examination, but a license was not issued because the required plant reactivity manipulations had not been completed.

The applicants were poorly prepared to pass either the written or operating portion of the initial examinations. The applicant that passed did so by a very small margin. Numerous generic weaknesses were noted and are discussed in the report.

We note that the performance observed during the December 1996 initial examination was a significant degradation compared to prior initial examinations with high passing rates. We are concerned that the poor performance of the applicants may be symptomatic of weak training, evaluation, or management that could adversely affect current licensed operators at Unit 1 and other Millstone units. From discussions with Jay Thayer, recovery officer for training, we are aware that Northeast Utilities shares these concerns and has initiated an independent evaluation of the root causes. Accordingly, within 60 days, we request that you submit your root cause assessment of the poor performance during the initial examination.

We are also concerned with the poor performance of the licensed reactor operators in their examinations for senior reactor operators. Significant weaknesses were noted in those areas that they are currently licensed to perform at Millstone Unit 1. The most significant weaknesses were in the ability to successfully operate controls that affect reactivity and diagnoses of instrument failures. Prior to the upgrade applicants performing licensed duties at the reactor operator level, NU is requested to review the applicable written and operating test weaknesses identified in individual upgrade applicant examination reports, and provide remediation and reevaluation as part of your requalification training program. Please inform us when you have completed this process prior to returning these operators to licensed duties.

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Mr. Bruce D. Kenyon

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In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the Commission's regulations, a copy of this letter and its enclosure will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room.

Should you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Don Florek of my staff at (610) 337-5185 or me at (610) 337-5198.

Sincerely,

Glenn W. Meyer, Chief
Operator Licensing and
Human Performance Branch
Division of Reactor Safety

Docket No. 50-245

Enclosure: Initial Operator Licensing Examination
Report No. 50-245/96-12 with Attachments 1-4

cc w/encl; w/o Attachments 1-4:

T. C. Feigenbaum, Executive Vice President - Chief Nuclear Officer
J. McElwain, Unit 1 Recovery Officer
D. M. Goebel, Vice President, Nuclear Oversight
J. K. Thayer, Recovery Officer, Nuclear Engineering and Support
P. D. Hinnenkamp, Director, Unit Operations
F. C. Rothen, Vice President, Work Services
L. M. Cuoco, Esquire
J. R. Egan, Esquire
V. Juliano, Waterford Library
Department of Public Utility Control
S. B. Comley, We The People
State of Connecticut SLO Designee

cc w/encl and Attachments 1-4:

H. F. Haynes, Director - Nuclear Training
J. F. Smith, Manager, Operator Training
P. Benyada, Assistant Supervisor - Operations Training

Mr. Bruce D. Kenyon

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Distribution w/encl and Attachments 1-4:

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G. Meyer, DRS

D. Florek, Chief Examiner, DRS

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