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February 11, 1997

SECY-97-033

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: Hugh L. Thompson, Jr.
Acting Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: ANNUAL STATUS REPORT ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF NRC'S
REQUALIFICATION PROGRAM AND INITIAL OPERATOR LICENSING
EXAMINATIONS (WITS 8800098)

PURPOSE:

To inform the Commission of the status of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) licensed operator requalification program and the results of NRC's initial licensing examinations for reactor operator (RO) and senior reactor operator (SRO) applicants.

BACKGROUND:

The staff issued its first periodic report on the status of NRC's licensed operator requalification program on August 28, 1989, and continued to issue

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quarterly or semi-annual status reports through the end of calendar year 1991. In a staff requirements memorandum dated January 8, 1992, the Commission directed the staff to henceforth submit an annual report and combine the results of NRC's initial RO and SRO licensing examinations and requalification examinations. On February 25, 1992, the staff issued its first combined report, SECY-92-066, "Semi-Annual Status Report on the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Licensed Operator Examinations." On February 5, 1993, the staff issued its first combined annual report, SECY-93-027, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations." On February 18, 1994, the staff issued its annual report, SECY-94-039, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations," and discussed its new requalification program inspection process in support of an amendment to Part 55 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR) as described in SECY-93-333, "Final Amendments to 10 CFR Part 55 on Renewal of Licenses and Requalification Requirements for Licensed Operators." On February 17, 1995, the staff issued its annual report, SECY-95-042, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations," in which it discussed the results of the elimination of the 10 CFR Part 55 requirement that each licensed operator pass a comprehensive requalification written examination and an operating test conducted by the NRC during the term of each operator's 6-year license.

On March 24, 1995, the staff issued SECY-95-075, "Proposed Changes to the NRC Operator Licensing Program," in which it stated its intent to revise the manner in which the NRC administers the initial operator licensing program to allow greater participation by facility licensees, to eliminate contractor assistance in this area, and to adjust the degree of NRC involvement in facility requalification examinations. On February 6, 1996, the staff issued its annual report, SECY-96-026, "Annual Status Report on the Administration of the NRC's Requalification Program and Initial Operator Licensing Examinations," in which it discussed the status of ongoing changes to the operator licensing process addressed in SECY-95-075. On June 10, 1996, the staff issued SECY-96-123, "Proposed Changes to the NRC Operator Licensing Program," in which it informed the Commission of the results of a pilot program under which facility licensees were permitted, in accordance with the pilot examination guidance in Generic Letter 95-06, "Changes in the Operator Licensing Program," to draft the written examinations and operating tests that the NRC administers to determine the competence of operator license applicants at nuclear power reactor facilities, and requested the Commission's approval to implement this new examination process on a voluntary basis, while in parallel pursuing mandatory implementation by the industry.

On September 25, 1996, the staff issued SECY-96-206, "Rulemaking Plan for Amendments to 10 CFR Part 55 To Change Licensed Operator Examination Requirements," in which it provided additional information regarding the initial operator licensing examination pilot process and requested the Commission's approval of the rulemaking plan to amend 10 CFR Part 55 to require power reactor facility licensees to prepare the entire initial

examination. In a Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) dated December 17, 1996, the Commission approved the staff's rulemaking plan (SECY-96-206) to establish new procedures for the preparation and administration of initial examinations for power reactor operators. The Commission also approved implementation of Revision 8 of NUREG-1021, "Operator Licensing Examination Standard for Power Reactors," on a voluntary basis until the rulemaking is complete. The Commission emphasized the importance of the NRC Chief Examiner role in ensuring that examinations developed by facilities meet NRC expectations regarding both format and level of difficulty, and cautioned the staff to budget adequate resources to carry out the task. This change is part of NRC's continuing efforts to be consistent with the Administration's initiatives to streamline the functions of the Federal Government and to accommodate anticipated resource reductions, including the eventual elimination of contractor support in the operator licensing area.

DISCUSSION:

NRC Requalification Examination and Inspection Summary for Fiscal Year 1996

During fiscal year 1996 (FY 96) the staff continued to monitor the requalification examination process. It evaluated the licensed operator requalification programs at 41 power reactor facilities during FY 96 to verify that the programs could ensure the continued competence of individual licensed operators. All of the programs were evaluated using the process described in Inspection Procedure (IP) 71001, "Licensed Operator Requalification Program Evaluation." The staff uses the IP to periodically evaluate the licensed operator requalification program at 24-month intervals consistent with the facility licensee's requalification examination cycle. Prior to August 1995, the staff inspected each licensed operator requalification program at least once during the facility licensee's Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) cycle. The staff may also conduct requalification examinations, as needed, when it loses confidence in a facility licensee's ability to conduct its own examinations or believes that the inspection process will not provide the needed insight; the staff did not conduct any requalification examinations during FY 96. As noted in SECY-95-042 and SECY-96-026, the staff is no longer tracking the number of licensed operators and crews who pass or fail their requalification examinations. Based on informal feedback from licensees regarding the successful staff efforts to minimize undue requalification examination stress, the staff considers the issue of undue requalification examination stress closed and will no longer report on this item unless a generic trend warrants closer scrutiny. The attachment contains detailed results of the requalification program inspections at each facility inspected. A rating of SAT (satisfactory) for

the requalification program inspections indicates that the staff did not elect to conduct NRC-administered requalification examinations because of any problems that may have been noted. The requalification program results are summarized in the following table.

Requalification Program Examination and/or Inspection Results for Fiscal Year 1996			
Element	Number Evaluated	SAT/UNSAT	Percent SAT
(NUREG-1021, Rev. 7) NRC Program Examinations	00	00/0	N/A
IP-71001 Program Inspections	41	41/0	100
Total	41	41/0	100

Summary of Initial Examination Results

The staff is continuing to administer initial examinations to applicants for RO and SRO licenses at power and non-power reactor facilities. The following table gives the initial operator licensing examination results for FY 87 through FY 96.

Initial Examination Results											
Examination		Percent Passed During Fiscal Year									
		'87	'88	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96
RO	Written	89	90	90	92	93	92	92	92	90	93
	Operating	96	95	95	95	96	98	94	95	97	94
SRO	Written	91	91	94	94	97	98	97	97	93	95
	Operating	91	95	92	93	95	96	95	93	95	93

These results show that facility operator training programs continue to produce applicants who pass NRC's licensing examinations at a relatively high percentage rate.

During FY 96, the staff administered approximately 92 site-specific initial licensing examinations to RO and SRO applicants at power and non-power reactor facilities and approximately 339 generic fundamentals examinations to prospective license applicants at power reactor facilities. This includes the staff's review and approval of 26 operator licensing examinations that had been prepared by facility licensees in accordance with the current examination development guidance (NUREG-1021, Revision 7, Supplement 1) as supplemented by the pilot examination guidance contained in GL 95-06.

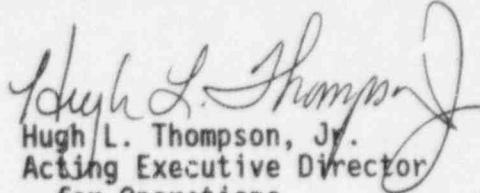
Operator Licensing Program Improvements

The NRC is continuing its efforts to improve the operator licensing program. During FY 96 and FY 97 to date the staff acted on the following initiatives to enhance the initial licensing process:

- (1) Conducted its "Annual Operator Licensing Examiners Training Conference" which provided an opportunity for NRC Certified Operator Licensing Examiners to receive training and hear policy direction from senior managers as a group, discuss pertinent topics and provide feedback to NRR. The conference is an effective tool in promoting unity and consistency in administering the operator licensing program.
- (2) Initiated implementation of Revision 8 of NUREG-1021, "Operator Licensing Examination Standard for Power Reactors," on a voluntary basis until the rulemaking is complete.
- (3) Issued NRC Generic Letter 95-06, Supplement 1: Changes in the Operator Licensing Program," which informed and notified all holders of operating licenses for nuclear power reactors of (1) the results of the pilot program described in GL 95-06 and (2) NRC's decision to change the operator licensing process so that facility licensees may voluntarily prepare the operating tests and prepare, administer, and grade the written examinations that the NRC will review, approve, and use to determine the competence of operator license applicants at power reactor facilities, pending rulemaking to require mandatory facility participation.
- (4) Participated in an industry sponsored public workshop for facility licensees planning to develop initial operator licensing examinations using the pilot process described in NRC Generic Letter 95-06.
- (5) Increased the participation of facility licensees in the development and administration of licensed operator examinations.
- (6) Reduced the participation of NRC contractors in the development and administration of licensed operator examinations.
- (7) Provided guidance through the Acting Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, to each Regional Administrator regarding changes in the operator licensing program. Specific action includes ensuring that NRC examiners are provided adequate time to review licensee drafted examinations, that examination reviews be scheduled sufficiently in advance of the examination date to allow changes to be made to the examination, that examinations meet NRC expectations prior to administration, and that NRC management oversight of the examination process is increased during the transition.

CONCLUSION:

The staff believes that NRC's initial and requalification examination and inspection programs continue to be effective methods for evaluating the adequacy of facility initial training and requalification programs and for assessing operator competence to perform licensed duties. The staff also believes that its continuing effort to improve these programs are necessary and fully consistent with the Administration's streamlining initiatives.


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Attachment: Status Report on the NRC
Requalification Program - Fiscal Year 1996

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STATUS REPORT ON THE NRC REQUALIFICATION PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 1996

Facility Evaluated	Inspection Procedure Performed	Program SAT*/UNSAT	Date
Oyster Creek	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Beaver Valley 1	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Seabrook	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Millstone 2	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Surry	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Big Rock Point	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Prairie Island	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Fort Calhoun	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Grand Gulf	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	10-95
Calvert Cliffs	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
Nine Mile 2	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
Crystal River	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
Watts Bar	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
Vogtle	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
Clinton	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
River Bend	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
South Texas	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
San Onofre 2/3	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	11-95
Browns Ferry	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	12-95
Sequoyah	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	12-95
Dresden	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	2-96
TMI 1	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-96

*See footnote at end of table.

ATTACHMENT

Facility Evaluated	Inspection Procedure Performed	Program SAT*/UNSAT	Date
Peach Bottom	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	3-96
Vermont Yankee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	4-96
Kewaunee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	4-96
LaSalle	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	4-96
Palisades	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	4-96
FitzPatrick	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-96
Maine Yankee	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-96
Robinson	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-96
Diablo Canyon	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	5-96
Millstone 1	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-96
Indian Point 3	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-96
Zion	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	6-96
Vogtle	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	7-96
Brunswick	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	7-96
Millstone 3	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-96
McGuire	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-96
Summer	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-96
Waterford 3	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-96
Wolf Creek	IP-71001 - Requal Program Inspection	SAT	9-96

* A program rating of SAT (satisfactory) indicates that the NRC staff did not elect to conduct NRC administered requalification examinations for cause as a result of any problems that may have been noted.