



NUCLEAR ENERGY INSTITUTE

Alexander Marion
DIRECTOR, ENGINEERING

September 19, 1996

Dr. Brian W. Sheron, Director
Division of Engineering
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Dr. ^{Brian} Sheron:

Last week Dr. Goutam Bagchi contacted NEI requesting our assistance and participation in an NRC workshop on the recently revised 10 CFR 50.55a regulation (61 *Federal Register* 41303, August 8, 1996). Specifically, he requested NEI to interact with the licensees to identify IWE/IWL implementation issues and concerns for discussion during this workshop. NEI agrees to this request and will be contacting utility licensees to seek their input.

On a related topic, NEI has received numerous calls from licensees concerning an interpretation of the 10 CFR 50.55a rule by their NRC project managers and by other NRC staff. Various NRC staff have apparently stated that the implementation date for the IWE/IWL repair and replacement program was September 9, 1996, regardless of whether the licensee is required to perform inservice inspections per IWE and IWL in accordance with the revised 10 CFR 50.55a by that date. Licensees who have contacted us said they have not been provided with a basis for this NRC staff interpretation.

As NEI understands this regulation, the provisions of 10 CFR 50.55a (g)(4)(v)(A) and (B) indicate that the rule and its implementation schedule discussed in §(g)(6)(ii)(B) apply to "inservice inspection, repair and replacement." There are no provisions in the rule which explicitly indicate a different implementation schedule for repair and replacement activities. Furthermore, there is nothing in the revised 10 CFR 50.55a rule which would eliminate the 12-month implementation delay contained in §(g)(4)(ii). Paragraph (g)(6)(ii)(B) of the rule clearly indicates that the repair and replacement provisions of IWE and IWL should be implemented when the remainder of the IWE or IWL inservice inspection requirements are

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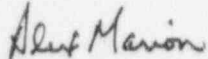
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implemented, by September 9, 2001. NEI respectfully requests confirmation of this understanding.

Additionally, several licensees have indicated that NRC staff have suggested they file relief requests (to the repair and replacement interpretation) pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a (a)(3). NEI also requests clarification of this since there is no regulatory requirement to immediately implement the repair and replacement provisions of IWE or IWL.

In conclusion, NEI requests a letter as soon as possible confirming the understanding of the regulation with regard to the repair and replacement provisions. If you have any questions concerning this letter, please call Kurt Cozens (202-739-8085) or me.

Sincerely,



Alex Marion

AM/KOC/ead

c: Dr. Goutam Bagchi, NRC/NRR