

POLICY ISSUE
NOTATION VOTE

RESPONSE SHEET

TO: Annette Vietti-Cook, Secretary

FROM: Commissioner Christopher T. Hanson

SUBJECT: SECY-19-0088 - Evaluation of Thresholds for
Reporting Abnormal Occurrences in Response to
SRM-M190423

Approved ☒ Disapproved ☐ Abstain ☐ Not Participating ☐

COMMENTS: Below ☐ Attached ☒ None ☐

Entered in STARS

Yes ☒

No ☐

Christopher T. Hanson
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Christopher T. Hanson
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July 13, 2020

DATE

Commissioner Hanson Comments on SECY-19-0088: Evaluation of Thresholds for Reporting Abnormal Occurrences (AO) in response to SRM-M190423”

I approve the staff’s recommendation to conduct additional evaluation and, if appropriate, develop revised medical event and source security reporting criteria for reporting Abnormal Occurrences (AO) to Congress. The results of the evaluation and proposed revised criteria (if applicable) should be provided to the Commission for approval.

In response to SRM-M190423, the staff conducted a limited evaluation of the existing AO reporting criteria and determined that the medical and source security AO reporting criteria may capture events that are not significant from the standpoint of public health or safety. Based on the input provided by the staff, it was determined that only about 15% of the medical events reported to Congress between 2013 and 2018, had the potential to cause significant¹ adverse health effects to the patient. In SECY-19-0088, the staff also noted that the current security criteria for theft does not provide an appropriate threshold for determining if an event involving the theft of Category 1 or Category 2 quantities of radioactive material is significant from the standpoint of public health or safety. Therefore, re-evaluating the medical and source security AO reporting criteria seems appropriate to ensure events reported to Congress are consistent with the requirements in Section 208 of the Energy Reorganization Act. Also, a revision could help to ensure the medical and security AO reporting criteria are consistent with the reporting criteria used for other uses of radioactive materials.

It is important to note that revising the AO reporting criteria will not have an effect on public health and safety in itself. Reporting requirements currently applicable to NRC licensees by regulation, license condition, and technical specifications will remain in place. Therefore, NRC will continue to monitor events, identify trends, and evaluate performance of licensed facilities.

If the staff proposes new criteria that could result in additional costs to Agreement States or licensees, the staff should provide a cost-benefit discussion to the Commission. If the criteria are revised, staff should monitor future events closely to ensure the new thresholds do not inadvertently screen out events that are significant from the standpoint of public health or safety. Additionally, if the criteria are revised, NRC staff could include events that would have been reported under the 2017 criteria as “Other Events of Interest” in the report to Congress. This could also help verify if the new threshold is appropriate, while maintaining an open channel of communication with Congress and the public.

Given the current public health emergency, existing agency priorities, and the level of coordination required to conduct the evaluation, I support the staff’s proposed timeframe of 18 months to conduct the evaluation. This timeframe will also allow for the collection and reporting of at least one additional cycle AO event data since the last revision of criteria in 2017.

¹ In SECY-19-0088, the staff defined significant adverse health effects as early effects that were more significant than acute radiation skin complications (e.g. erythema). Section 208 of the Energy Reorganization Act defines AO as “an unscheduled incident or event which the Commission determines is significant from the standpoint of public health or safety.”