

Industry's COVID Lessons Learned

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Scope of this Discussion

- Our focus is on the industry's experience in responding to and supporting NRC inspections and compliance, not on NRC licensing activities
- Much of our experience arises from the NRC's widespread use of remote and hybrid inspections since March 2020
- Our knowledge of the NRC's experience is limited to what we have observed and what the NRC has shared with industry, and how industry responded

Sources

- Regional Utility Group (RUG) meetings
- ROP Task Force meetings
- NSIAC meetings
- NEI's Inspection Modernization Team

Key Learnings

- Collaboration
- Remote Work
- Technology
- Processes
- New Normal

Collaboration

- The COVID-19 public health emergency brought out the best in industry and the NRC:
 - Cooperation in protecting plant staff and inspectors from infection
 - Mutual appreciation for the vital roles both sides play in protecting public health, safety, security and the environment, and in assuring the provision of safe, reliable electricity
 - Adapting to novel and changing conditions, including mandatory remote work
 - Collaboration in solving emergent problems quickly and efficiently

Remote Work

- COVID lessons learned are primarily about adapting to telework
- Universal telework dramatically changed how we communicate, how we get work done, and how we use technology to support our work and relationships
- Universal telework:
 - Is changing workplace culture
 - Has been a boon to many employees, a bane to some, and a challenge to all
 - Has highlighted what can and can't be done virtually
 - Caused a reassessment of who needs to be onsite and how often

Technology

- The PHE accelerated and promoted the adoption of communications and information-sharing technologies that were already entering our workplaces
 - Video conferencing
 - Electronic information exchange/filessharing services
 - Remote access to plant data and information systems
 - Video recording or live-streaming
 - Virtual meeting/presentation platforms
- The technology imperative highlighted challenges in the industry's and NRC's electronic interfaces, cyber security requirements and privacy policies
- A common report: technology facilitates inspector access to licensee's virtual meetings, documents, and information systems

Processes

- Widespread teleworking has broadened our understanding of where things must be done
 - Key elements of the inspection process can be done “anywhere”
 - ◆ Document retrieval
 - ◆ Document review/inspection prep
 - ◆ Inspector Q&A
 - ◆ Entrance meetings
 - ◆ Exit meetings
 - Planned interactions between inspectors and licensee personnel (such as interviews) can be done through video conferencing

New Normal

- The COVID experience has overturned assumptions about the benefits and costs of expecting support staff to be onsite
 - Health and safety risks of being onsite
 - Flexibility of telework expands the available workforce and reduces demand for onsite resources (such as office space, in-processing, security screening, etc.)
 - Efficiencies of telework mean greater productivity, job satisfaction
- Many, possibly most, licensees are considering reducing their onsite population by enabling/encouraging support staff to telework

Recommendations

- Establish guiding principles for modernizing the inspection program (ours are shown on the following slide)
- Begin by applying those principles to the use of remote inspection techniques
- Work with industry and other external stakeholders to identify impediments and solutions to the use of remote inspection techniques
- Continue to explore the baseline inspection program to identify additional opportunities to improve inspection efficiency and effectiveness through the use of technology

Guiding Principles

1. Maintain NRC effectiveness
2. Maintain NRC independence
3. Ensure Resident Inspectors' access
4. Recognize necessity of some onsite activities
5. Be flexible in application of remote techniques
6. Leverage information technology
7. Embrace efficiencies where they are found
8. Use remote techniques where doing so enhances efficiency
9. After effectiveness is assured, optimize efficiency
10. Consider pros and cons for both NRC and licensees

Conclusions

- Telework is part of the new normal for NRC and industry
- It offers benefits and efficiencies to our plant support workers
- The way we support NRC inspections has changed and these changes will continue after COVID passes
- We are eager to work with the NRC to ensure the NRC can utilize remote methods and gain efficiencies through technology