



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

March 15, 2000

50-410

Mr. John H. Mueller
Chief Nuclear Officer
Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation
Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station
Operations Building, Second Floor
P.O. Box 63
Lycoming, NY 13093

SUBJECT: NINE MILE POINT NUCLEAR STATION, UNIT NO. 2 - SITE-SPECIFIC
WORKSHEETS FOR USE IN THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S
SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION PROCESS (TAC NO. MA6544)

Dear Mr. Mueller:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with one of the key implementation tools to be used by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in the revised reactor oversight process, which is currently expected to be implemented at Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station, Unit No. 2, in April 2000. Included in the enclosed Risk-Informed Inspection Notebooks are the Significance Determination Process (SDP) worksheets that inspectors will be using to risk-characterize inspection findings. The SDP is discussed in more detail below.

On January 8, 1999, the NRC staff described to the Commission plans and recommendations to improve the reactor oversight process in SECY-99-007, "Recommendations for Reactor Oversight Process Improvements." SECY-99-007 is available on the NRC's web site at www.nrc.gov/NRC/COMMISSION/SECYS/index.html. The new process, developed with stakeholder involvement, is designed around a risk-informed framework, which is intended to focus both the NRC's and licensee's attention and resources on those issues of more risk significance.

The performance assessment portion of the new process involves the use of both licensee-submitted performance indicator data and inspection findings that have been appropriately categorized based on their risk significance. In order to properly categorize an inspection finding, the NRC has developed the SDP. This process was described to the Commission in SECY-99-007A, "Recommendations for Reactor Oversight Process Improvements (Follow-up to SECY-99-007)," dated March 22, 1999, also available at the same NRC web site noted above.

The SDP for power operations involves evaluating an inspection finding's impact on the plant's capability to limit the frequency of initiating events; ensure the availability, reliability, and capability of mitigating systems; and ensure the integrity of the fuel cladding, reactor coolant system, and containment barriers. As described in SECY-99-007A, the SDP involves the use of three tables: Table 1 is the estimated likelihood for initiating event occurrence during the degraded period, Table 2 describes how the significance is determined based on remaining mitigation system capabilities, and Table 3 provides the bases for the failure probabilities associated with the remaining mitigation equipment and strategies.

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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J. Mueller

- 2 -

March 15, 2000

As a result of the recently concluded Pilot Plant review effort, the NRC has determined that site-specific risk data is needed in order to provide a repeatable determination of the significance of an issue. Therefore, the NRC has contracted with Brookhaven National Lab (BNL) to develop site-specific worksheets to be used in the SDP review. These enclosed worksheets were developed based on your Individual Plant Examination (IPE) submittals that were requested by Generic Letter 88-20. The NRC plans to use this site-specific information in evaluating the significance of issues identified at your facility when the revised reactor oversight process is implemented industry-wide. We recognize that the IPE used during this effort may not contain current information. Therefore, the NRC or its contractor will conduct a site visit to discuss with your staff any changes that may be appropriate. Specific dates for the site visit have not been determined, but will be communicated to you in the near future. All site visits should be accomplished by June 2000. The NRC is not requesting a written response or comments on the enclosed worksheets developed by BNL.

We will coordinate our efforts through your licensing or risk organizations as appropriate. If you have any questions, please contact me at 301-415-1451.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Peter S. Tam, Sr. Project Manager, Section 1
 Project Directorate I
 Division of Licensing Project Management
 Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-410

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl: See next page

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We will coordinate our efforts through your licensing or risk organizations as appropriate. If you have any questions, please contact me at 301-415-1451.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter S. Tam". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter S. Tam, Sr. Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-410

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl: See next page

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Unit No. 2

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