

Extract from NRC Inspection Manual Chapter 0305, "Operating reactor Assessment Program"

section 06.05.b.4 Multiple/Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone column.

Assessment inputs result in a repetitive degraded cornerstone (2 white or 1 yellow input for five or more consecutive quarters), multiple degraded cornerstones, multiple yellow inputs or a red input. Regarding repetitive degraded cornerstone, if the only greater than green findings in the fifth quarter have been held open greater than four quarters, the repetitive degraded cornerstone does not apply. If, however, one of the greater than green findings is still within the original four quarters and one or more findings has been held open greater than four quarters, the repetitive degraded cornerstone does apply. In this instance, the plant would stay in the Multiple/Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone column until there was only one greater than green finding, regardless of the length of time the findings have been opened.

The licensee is expected to place the identified deficiencies in its corrective action program and perform an evaluation of the root and contributing causes for both the individual and the collective issues. This evaluation may consist of a third party assessment. *The licensee is also expected to perform an independent assessment of their safety culture.* [C4] In this context, an independent assessment is an assessment that is performed by qualified individuals that have no direct authority and have not been responsible for any of the areas being evaluated.

Inspection procedure 95003, "Inspection for Repetitive Degraded Cornerstones, Multiple Degraded Cornerstones, Multiple Yellow Inputs, or One Red Input," will be performed to review the breadth and depth of the performance deficiencies, assess the licensee's evaluation of their safety culture, and independently perform an assessment of the licensee's safety culture. A decision not to independently perform an assessment of the licensee's safety culture would be a deviation from the Action Matrix and would have to be approved in accordance with section 06.06.f. The supplemental inspection plan must be approved by the appropriate regional division director with concurrence of the Deputy Director of the Division of Inspection and Regional Support (DIRS).

Following the completion of the inspection, the EDO or his designee, in conjunction with the regional administrator and the Director of NRR, will decide whether additional agency actions are warranted. These actions could include additional supplemental inspection, a demand for information, a confirmatory action letter, or issuance of an order, up to and including a plant shutdown. At a minimum, the regional office will issue a confirmatory action letter to document the licensee's commitments as discussed in their performance improvement plan, as well as any other written or verbal commitments. The regional administrator should document the results of their decision in a letter to the licensee. These regulatory actions may also be considered prior to the completion of inspection procedure 95003, if warranted. The regulatory performance meeting will normally consist of a public meeting between the licensee and the regional

administrator (or Executive Director for Operations).

Note: Other than the CAL, the regulatory actions in this column of the Action Matrix are not mandatory. However, the regional office should consider each of these regulatory actions when significant new information regarding licensee performance becomes available.

*Due to the depth and/or breadth of performance issues reflected by a plant being in the Multiple/Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone column of the Action Matrix, it is prudent to ensure that actual performance improvements (which typically take longer than several quarters to achieve) have been made prior to closing out the inspection findings and exiting the Multiple/Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone column of the Action Matrix. [C2]* In making this determination, the regional offices should consider whether:

- a. New plant events or findings do not reveal similar significant performance weaknesses.
- b. NRC and licensee performance indicators do not indicate similar significant performance weaknesses that have not been adequately addressed.
- c. The licensee's performance improvement program has demonstrated sustained improvement.
- d. NRC supplemental inspections show licensee progress in the principal areas of weakness.
- e. There were no issues that led the NRC to take additional regulatory actions beyond those listed in the Multiple/ Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone Column of the Action Matrix. Additionally, the licensee has made significant progress on any regulatory actions which were imposed (i.e. CALs, orders, 50.54 (f) letters) because of the performance deficiencies which led to the Multiple/Repetitive degraded cornerstone designation.

After the original findings have been closed out, the licensee will return to the Action Matrix column that is represented by the other outstanding safety significant inspection findings and performance indicators. *Additionally, for a period of up to one year after the initial findings have been closed out, the regional offices may utilize some actions that are consistent with the Degraded Cornerstone or Multiple/Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone column of the Action Matrix in order to ensure the appropriate level of agency oversight of licensee improvement initiatives. [C2]* These actions, which do not constitute a deviation from the Action Matrix, include senior management participation at periodic meetings/site visits focused on reviewing the results of improvement initiatives (such as efforts to reduce corrective action backlogs and progress in completing the Performance Improvement Plan), non-baseline IP 95003 and CAL followup inspections (not to exceed 200 hours of direct inspection without concurrence from the Deputy Director of the Division of Inspection and Regional Support (DIRS), the annual public meetings, and authorization of the contents of the subsequent assessment letters. The actions taken above those required by the Action Matrix shall be discussed at the following mid-cycle and end-of-cycle review meetings to ensure an appropriate basis for needing the additional actions to oversee the licensee improvement initiatives. These actions will also be described in the following mid-cycle and annual assessment letters until the end of the extended period of time. All assessment letters that address these additional actions shall include the NRR Performance Assessment Branch (IPAB) on concurrence. The regional offices must convey the specific actions that the licensee needs to address to

remove the findings that caused the licensee to enter the Multiple/Repetitive Degraded Cornerstone column from consideration in the assessment program. The correspondence to the licensee describing the extension of the inspection finding(s) in the assessment program beyond the normal four quarters must be authorized by the appropriate regional division director with the concurrence of the Deputy Director of the Division of Inspection and Regional Support (DIRS).