

November 22, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO: Frederick D. Brown, Director
Division of Inspection and Regional Support
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

FROM: John McHale, Chief **/RA/**
Operator Licensing and Training Branch
Division of Inspection and Regional Support
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 15, 2010, MEETING WITH THE NEI
INDEPENDENT PANEL REGARDING OPERATOR LICENSING
TRAINING AND EXAMINATION PROCESSES

On November 15, 2010, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff held a public meeting with the NEI Independent Panel on the operator licensing training and examination process to discuss a number of operator licensing issues. Enclosure 1 lists attendees at the meeting.

This meeting was the latest in a series of meetings intended to enhance the operator licensing training and examination processes. The discussions included the conclusions and recommendations of the panel's review. Enclosure 2 is the agenda for the meeting, and the discussion topics are summarized in Enclosure 3. The presentation slides developed by the NEI Independent Panel are included as Enclosure 4.

Representatives of the NRC and the industry agreed that this meeting was useful for the exchange of information.

Enclosures: As stated

CONTACT: Chris Cowdrey, NRR/DIRS
(301)415-2758

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List of Attendees – NRC / NEI Independent Panel Meeting on Operator Licensing
November 15, 2010

Name	Organization
John (Jack) McHale	NRC/NRR
Bruce Boger	NRC/NRR
Mike Cheok	NRC/NRR
Mike Junge	NRC/NRO
Joel Munday	NRC/RII
Malcolm Widman	NRC/RII
Dave Reeser	NRC/RIII
Kriss Kennedy	NRC/RIV
Bryce Shriver	NEI Independent Panel
Audeen Fentiman	NEI Independent Panel
Ken Brockman	NEI Independent Panel
Bob Meyer	Public (PROS)
Tim Dennis	Public

AGENDA FOR THE CATEGORY 2 PUBLIC MEETING WITH THE NEI INDEPENDENT
PANEL REGARDING OPERATOR LICENSING TRAINING AND EXAMINATION PROCESSES

Monday, November 15, 2010
10:15 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
One White Flint North
11555 Rockville Pike – Room O 13D20
Rockville, MD 20852

TOPIC

LEAD

Introductions and Opening Remarks

NRC/NEI panel

Public Comments

Public

Discussion of the Results of the Panel's review of the
Operator Licensing Training and Examination Processes

NEI panel

Public Comments

Public

Summary/Conclusions/Action Items

NRC/NEI panel

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

MEETING PURPOSE

The panel mentioned that the purpose of the meeting was to review the panel's conclusions and discuss the panel's recommendations following their review of the operator licensing process. The panel outlined their view of the goals for the operator licensing process and stated that the result of the process should be to ensure that the personnel granted licenses are competent to fulfill their role in ensuring safe, reliable nuclear plant operations. Additionally, the panel mentioned that it is desirable that the process be reliable, consistent and efficient.

The panel identified the reasons for conducting the review as an attempt to improve business effectiveness of the NRC and utilities, as well as to investigate any opportunities for improvement to the process in terms of technological and educational advances. The panel outlined the process that was followed and discussed the various organizations that were surveyed and consulted as part of the review.

NEI REVIEW PANEL CONCLUSIONS

The panel evaluated the current three-part exam process and concluded that it is effective, with the potential for improvements. The panel summarized the general view that the written examination is the most critical portion of the examination process due to perceived weaknesses in the simulator and job performance measure (JPM) portions of the examination. The panel identified the potential reasons for these weaknesses as the limited scope of these portions of the examination, narrowly defined failure criteria and difficulties associated with evaluating individual performance while significant team interaction is occurring.

The panel further identified weaknesses in the utility training programs at some stations. Specifically, the panel mentioned that some training and evaluation programs may not necessarily reflect the operator knowledge and abilities (K/As) importance ratings. Additionally, the panel stated that the routine written examinations in some training programs tend to focus primarily on the most recent material and therefore do not prepare students for the comprehensive nature of the NRC examination. Further, the panel identified weaknesses in the audit and NRC written examination validation processes.

The panel concluded that the K/A approach is effective, but would benefit from some revision. The panel suggested that the K/A catalog is outdated and lacks an understanding of current licensed operator job functions and that the K/As are not linked to current accredited training program objectives. The panel mentioned that some utilities attempt to link selected K/As to training program objectives while developing their NRC written examinations. The panel further identified an absence of any integrated guide to help determine whether a K/A would be better tested on the written or operating portion of the examination. Finally, the panel mentioned that there is limited use of the NRC examination bank while developing questions for the written examinations and determined the reasons to be a lack of questions that are linked to K/As and meet current NRC standards, an overall limited number of questions, and concerns with examination security and validity.

NEI REVIEW PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel recommended the preservation of the current three-part examination process with a series of enhancements including an updated job task analysis and K/A catalog. The panel then followed with a recommendation to link the utility training programs objectives to the updated K/As. Additionally, the panel advised the completion of utility actions related to operator training programs as outlined by the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) in 2009. Finally, the panel recommended an integrated plan be developed for the following process improvements: strengthened acceptance criteria for the operating examinations, established process for an approved examination bank, established guidance for use of the approved examination bank, and implementation of an integrated examination plan using the updated K/A approach.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION / ACTION ITEMS

In summary, the NRC staff and attendees agreed that the meeting was useful and that continued communication between the panel and the NRC would be beneficial. The panel mentioned that the remaining actions included incorporating comments from the November 15, 2010 meeting and consideration of further meetings with additional stakeholders. Following the completion of any additional meetings, the panel stated that they would then provide their recommendations to NEI and utility executives and provide insights on the implementation of the panel's recommendations. No specific action items were taken from the meeting.