UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

(FSME-11-026, March, Other, Tohoku-Taiheiyouoki, IN 2011-05)

March 21, 2011

ALL STATE LIAISON OFFICERS
ALL RADIATION CONTROL PROGRAM DIRECTORS

NOTIFICATION OF ISSUANCE OF INFORMATION NOTICE 2011-05 "TOHOKU-TAIHEIYOUOKI EARTHQUAKE EFFECTS ON JAPANESE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS" AND AVAILABILITY OF SEISMIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE NRC WEBSITE (FSME-11-026)

**Purpose:** To provide recipients with a copy of Information Notice (IN) 2011-05 and NRC website link for Seismic Questions and Answers for their information and awareness.

**Background:** The NRC has been monitoring the response to the earthquake and associated tsunami which struck Japan on March 11, 2011.

**Discussion:** The NRC continues to respond as appropriate and necessary to the earthquake/tsunami. The NRC has issued IN 2011-05 to its reactor licensees, to inform addressees of effects of the Tohoku-Taiheiyou-Oki Earthquake on nuclear power plants in Japan, and to inform addressees of measures, current as of the issuance date of the IN, which NRC has taken in view of the known consequences of the Japan earthquake/tsunami disaster. The NRC is providing a copy of IN 2011-05 to the State Liaison Officers and Radiation Control Program Directors for their information and awareness. No action or response is required.

In addition, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has posted a series of updated seismic and tsunami questions and answers on its website. The Q&A provides basic information on earthquakes and tsunamis, details on U.S. nuclear power plant seismic design and an explanation of NRC's recent study on earthquake risk. The document is available at http://www.nrc.gov/japan/faqs-related-to-japan.pdf, and other NRC information related to the March 11 earthquake and tsunami is available at http://www.nrc.gov/japan/japan-info.html.

For questions regarding the issues and suggestions raised in IN 2011-05, please contact the individual listed as the technical contact in IN 2011-05. For questions about this FSME letter, please contact the individual listed below.

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Enclosure: IN 2011-05

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NEW REACTORS
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20555-0001

March 18, 2011

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE 2011-05: TOHOKU-TAIHEIYOU-OKI EARTHQUAKE EFFECTS ON JAPANESE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

## ADDRESSEES

All holders of or applicants for operating licenses for nuclear power reactors under the provision of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 50, "Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities," except those who have permanently ceased operations and have certified that fuel has been permanently removed from the reactor vessel.

All holders of or applicants for a standard design certification, standard design approval, manufacturing license, limited work authorization, early site permits or combined license issued under 10 CFR Part 52, "Licenses, Certifications and Approvals for Nuclear Power Plants."

## PURPOSE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing this information notice (IN) to inform addressees of effects of the Tohoku-Taiheiyou-Oki Earthquake on nuclear power plants in Japan. The NRC expects that recipients will review the information for applicability to their facilities and consider actions, as appropriate, to avoid similar problems. Suggestions contained in this IN are not NRC requirements; therefore, no specific action or written response is required.

## DESCRIPTION OF CIRCUMSTANCES

The following summary of events is provided based on the best information available at this time. The situation in Japan regarding recovery efforts for the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station continues to evolve on an hourly basis.

On March 11, 2011, the Tohoku-Taiheiyou-Oki Earthquake occurred near the east coast of Honshu, Japan. This magnitude 9.0 earthquake and the subsequent tsunami caused significant damage to at least four of the six units of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station as the result of a sustained loss of both the offsite and on-site power systems. Efforts to restore power to emergency equipment have been hampered or impeded by damage to the surrounding areas due to the tsunami and earthquake.

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Units 1 through 3, which had been operating at the time of the earthquake, scrammed automatically, inserting their neutron absorbing control rods to ensure immediate shutdown of the fission process. Following the loss of electric power to normal and emergency core cooling systems and the subsequent failure of back-up decay heat removal systems, water injection into the cores of all three reactors was compromised, and reactor water levels could not be maintained. Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), the operator of the plant, resorted to injecting sea water and boric acid into the reactor vessels of these three units, in an effort to cool the fuel and ensure the reactors remained shutdown. However, the fuel in the reactor cores became partially uncovered. Hydrogen gas built up in Units 1 and 3 as a result of exposed, overheated fuel reacting with water. Following gas venting from the primary containment to relieve pressure, hydrogen explosions occurred in both units and damaged the secondary containments. It appears that primary containments for Units 1 and 3 remain functional, but the primary containment for Unit 2 may be damaged. TEPCO cut a hole in the side of the Unit 2 secondary containment to prevent hydrogen buildup following a sustained period when there was no water injection into the core.

In addition, Units 3 and 4 have low spent fuel pool (SFP) water levels. Efforts continue to supply seawater to the SFPs for Units 1 through 4 using various methods. At this time, the integrity of the SFPs for Units 3 and 4 is unknown.

Fukushima Daiichi Units 4 through 6 were shutdown for refueling outages at the time of the earthquake. The fuel assemblies for Unit 4 had been offloaded from the reactor core to the SFP. The SFPs for Units 5 and 6 appear to be intact, but the temperature of the pool water appears to be increasing. Emergency power is available to provide cooling water flow through the SFPs for Units 5 and 6.

The Japanese Government ordered an evacuation out to 20 km for the area surrounding Fukushima Daiichi. Residents out to 30 km were ordered to shelter in place.

The damage to Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station appears to have been caused by initiating events outside of the design basis for the facilities.

## BACKGROUND

10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, “General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants,” General Design Criterion (GDC) 2, “Design Bases for Protection against Natural Phenomena,” or similar appropriate requirements in the licensing basis for a reactor facility, requires that structures, systems, and components (SSCs) important to safety be designed to withstand the effects of natural phenomena such as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, tsunami, and seiches without loss of capability to perform their safety functions. The design bases for these SSCs reflect: (1) appropriate consideration of the most severe of the natural phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and surrounding area, with sufficient margin for the limited accuracy, quantity, and period of time in which the historical data have been accumulated, (2) appropriate combinations of the effects of normal and accident conditions with the effects of the natural phenomena, and (3) the importance of the safety functions to be performed.

As a result of the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, the NRC issued EA-02-026, "Order for Interim Safeguards and Security Compensatory Measures" (the ICM Order) dated February 25, 2002. The ICM Order, which is designated as Safeguards Information (SGI), modified then-operating licenses for commercial power reactor facilities to require compliance with specified interim safeguards and security compensatory measures. Section B.5.b of the ICM Order requires licensees to adopt mitigation strategies using readily available resources to maintain or restore core cooling, containment, and SFP cooling capabilities to cope with the loss of large areas of the facility due to large fires and explosions from any cause, including beyond-design-basis aircraft impacts.

By letter, dated February 25, 2005, the NRC staff provided guidance for implementing Section B.5.b of the ICM Order. This guidance, designated as SGI, included best practices for mitigating losses of large areas of the plant and measures to mitigate fuel damage and minimize releases. Following issuance of the B.5.b Phase 1 Guidance, the NRC staff conducted inspections at operating reactor sites using Temporary Instruction (TI) 2515/164 (SGI) and subsequently TI 2515/168 (SGI) to ensure compliance with Section B.5.b of the ICM Order.

In December 2006, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) issued NEI 06-12, Revision 2, "B.5.b Phase 2 & 3 Submittal Guideline." NEI 06-12 is designated for Official Use Only – Security Related Information (OUO-SRI). The NRC endorsed NEI 06-12, Revision 2, by letter dated December 22, 2006, also designated OUO-SRI, as an acceptable means for developing and implementing the mitigation strategies requirement in Section B.5.b of the ICM Order. NEI 06-12, Revision 2, provides guidance for implementing a set of strategies intended to maintain or restore core cooling, containment, and SFP cooling capabilities under the circumstances associated with the loss of a large area of the plant due to explosions or fire. NEI 06-12 provides guidance in the following areas:

- Adding make-up water to the SFP,
- Spraying water on the spent fuel,
- Enhanced initial command and control activities for challenges to core cooling and containment, and
- Enhanced response strategies for challenges to core cooling and containment.

The specific strategies covered in NEI 06-12, Revision 2, were developed based on the results of assessments conducted at currently licensed power reactor facilities for the purpose of enhancing plant specific mitigation capability for damage conditions caused by a large explosion or fire. These assessments identified a wide spectrum of potential plant specific strategies. NEI 06-12, Revision 2, specifies one set of strategies applicable to all pressurized-water reactors and another set applicable to all boiling-water reactors. Both sets are derived from the results of the plant specific assessments.

The B.5.b Phase 1 Guidance and NEI 06-12, Revision 2, were used by each licensee in preparing information submitted to the NRC that describes a plant specific approach to implementing mitigating strategies and supports each plant specific license condition. The NRC staff has completed its review of the information submitted by each licensee, as well as

information obtained during prior NRC inspections, and has issued an OUO-SRI safety evaluation (SE) that documents the bases for its approval of the license condition for each facility. The SE issued for each licensee includes regulatory guidance in Section 3.0 of Appendix A, "Phase 1 Assessment," that recites the generic B.5.b Phase 1 Guidance of Reference 3, as clarified in TI 2515/168, in a form that is designated OUO-SRI rather than SGI.

By publishing new requirements in the *Federal Register* dated March 27, 2009 (74 FR 13926), the NRC amended 10 CFR Part 50, 10 CFR Part 52, "Licenses, Certifications, and Approvals for Nuclear Power Plants," and 10 CFR Part 73, "Physical Protection of Plants and Materials." This rulemaking added paragraph (i) to 10 CFR 50.34, "Contents of Applications; Technical Information," and paragraph (d) to 10 CFR 52.80 " Contents of Applications; Additional Technical Information," to require submittal of a "description and plans for implementation of the guidance and strategies intended to maintain or restore core cooling, containment, and spent fuel pool cooling capabilities under the circumstances associated with the loss of large areas of the plant due to explosions or fire as required by § 50.54(hh)(2) of this chapter." This rulemaking also added 10 CFR 50.54(hh)(2) to impose the same mitigating strategies requirements on all reactor applicants and licensees as those imposed by the ICM Order and associated license conditions. The Statement of Considerations for this rulemaking specifically noted that the requirements in 10 CFR 50.54(hh) are intended to address certain events that are the cause of large fires and explosions that affect a substantial portion of the nuclear power plant and are not limited or directly linked to an aircraft impact. In addition, the rule contemplates that the initiating event for such large fires and explosions could be any number of beyond-design basis events. Such events include natural phenomena such as those described in GDC 2 (i.e., earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, tsunami, and seiches), without regard to the GDC 2 provisions governing the severity of natural phenomena.

NRC regulations at 10 CFR 50.63, "Loss of All Alternating Current Power," require that light-water-cooled nuclear power plants be capable of withstanding for a specified duration and recovering from a station blackout.

## DISCUSSION

The nuclear power industry has taken the actions listed below at each licensed reactor site. Additional information is available in the NEI Fact Sheet, "Industry Taking Action to Ensure Continued Safety at U.S. Nuclear Energy Plants," dated March 16, 2011, available at www.nei.org.

1. verification of the capability to mitigate conditions that result from severe adverse events, including the loss of significant operational and safety systems due to natural events, fires, aircraft impact and explosions
2. verification of the capability to mitigate a total loss of electric power to a nuclear power plant
3. verification of the capability to mitigate flooding and the impact of floods on systems inside and outside the plant

4. identification of the potential for loss of equipment functions during seismic events appropriate for the site and the development of mitigating strategies to address potential vulnerabilities

NRC assessment of the implications of beyond design-basis natural phenomena is continuing as more information becomes available. The NRC staff is currently developing a TI to guide staff in performing independent assessments of nuclear power plant readiness to address beyond design-basis natural phenomena under the Reactor Oversight Process. The NRC is considering additional generic communications and additional action including requesting operating plants to provide specific information relating to their facilities to enable the NRC staff to complete a regulatory assessment of beyond design basis phenomena.

## PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT

This Information Notice does not contain any information collections and, therefore, is not subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.).

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The NRC may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a request for information or an information collection requirement unless the requesting document displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget control number.

## CONTACTS

This information notice requires no specific action or written response. Please direct any questions about this matter to the technical contact listed below or the appropriate Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) project manager.

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Note: NRC generic communications may be found on the NRC public Web site, http://www.nrc.gov, under Electronic Reading Room/Document Collections.

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