



NRC NEWS

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NRC CHAIRMAN ADDRESSES GROWTH ISSUE AT PLATTS NUCLEAR ENERGY CONFERENCE

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Dale Klein said Thursday the NRC hopes not be to an impediment to the licensing of new reactors that utilities want to build in the coming decade.

“I am a regulator and I cannot promote nuclear energy,” Klein said at the third Annual Platts Nuclear Energy Conference, “but let me indulge in a bit of optimism. I do not believe the NRC to be a bottleneck in the process.”

Klein, describing his vision of standard applications and a strong regulatory authority with set requirements, said in prepared remarks that the NRC will strive to provide “the regulatory stability needed in the uncertain first days of a rapidly expanding, technologically complex and capital-intensive industrial sector.”

He also said he hopes to reduce the time necessary to process new reactor applications. “We’re still looking at ways to reduce the review time required for early site permits and combined operating licenses,” he said, “with no compromise on safety. That is not an unrealistic goal if industry does its job at the beginning of the licensing process” with standardized designs and applications.

He predicted that the “pinch points” in the licensing process are finding high quality components, hiring sufficient qualified personnel and connecting substantial numbers of new plants to the nation’s electrical grid. He added that the NRC and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission are working closely to address issues associated with adding plants to the nation’s electrical grid to meet increasing demand for electricity.

In addition, he said the agency will make certain its rigorous inspection program will ensure the quality and authenticity of the components that go into new nuclear plants in the United States.

Praising the work of Congress in keeping funding flowing to the agency, Klein said the current proposed fiscal ’08 budget will allow the agency to keep dealing with industry growth. He said through the end of fiscal ’08 the agency will hire about 600 more individuals, helping to deal with the graying workforce the agency is dealing with.

Klein said the agency has worked hard to develop a successful recruiting strategy. He also encouraged the nuclear industry to work at encouraging young Americans to join the industry through financial incentives to students.

“Look at it this way,” said Klein. “The nuclear industry will be spending billions on hardware. It would be foolhardy not to spend the millions necessary to develop the human capital to operate all that expensive machinery efficiently.”

The full text of Klein’s remarks can be found at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/speeches/2007/s-07-003.html> .

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