



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 09-095

May 27, 2009

NRC CHAIRMAN GREGORY B. JACZKO'S REMARKS AT TODAY'S COMMISSION MEETING ON SAFETY CULTURE IN ROCKVILLE, MD.

Today is an important day here at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as we discuss our expectations for a healthy safety and security culture both at the agency and at those facilities and companies that we regulate. At the core of the concept is ensuring that safety is at the center of what is done both here in the NRC and throughout the nuclear industry each day.

A little over two years ago I spoke at a forum in South Carolina on this topic. I discussed how, as a regulator, I care about safety culture, because we generally find evidence of a deteriorating safety culture at facilities that have experienced safety problems. That is why a healthy safety culture within the industry is at the core of protecting the public and the environment.

The agency has done a lot in this general area over the years, including the development of policy statements on the safe conduct of nuclear power plant operations and on a safety conscious work environment. We have recently incorporated safety culture into the Reactor Oversight Process. Now we are discussing a draft policy statement that would extend this concept to all of our licensees and establish our expectations for a sound safety and security culture. The NRC staff recently provided the Commission with a draft of this policy statement and I want to congratulate the staff on the work they have done on some fairly complex issues. I also want to thank my fellow commissioners who have devoted significant time and effort to this topic, and to acknowledge the non-concurrence included in the commission paper.

The public is best served when we have a full and transparent discussion of these important issues. I look forward to this meeting that will launch the effort to get public feedback on what we are proposing in the area of safety culture. I also look forward to moving this matter quickly and getting the draft policy out for public comment as soon as we can.

Our discussions this afternoon will look at how to make further improvements to the safety culture at the NRC. There are a couple of different initiatives going on in that area. First, we assembled a task force of employees who produced a very thorough report with some great ideas for ways to make additional progress. They accomplished a substantial amount of work in a short period of time and did an outstanding job. We appreciate everyone's contribution to that report and to the vigorous debate which took place during its development.

Second, the NRC Inspector General is once again conducting a survey of our employees and how they think safety is regarded at the agency. This is an important effort and I look forward to the insights it will provide.

Safety culture is one of the more important topics we deal with because it is integral to what we –and our licensees – do every day. We can count today as a success if we advance the cause of safety by improving the safety and security culture both inside this building and out. Today's discussion is an important factor in realizing improvements in this area.

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