NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 10-153 September 1, 2010

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION TAKES STEPS TO ENHANCE SMALL MODULAR REACTOR LICENSE REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Acting on an initiative advanced by Commissioner George Apostolakis and Chairman Gregory B. Jaczko, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has taken steps to further improve the licensing reviews of potential applications to license small modular reactors (SMRs).

Commissioners Kristine Svinicki, William Magwood and William Ostendorff concurred in the proposal that directs the NRC staff to produce a plan within six months on how to more fully integrate the use of risk insights into pre-application activities and the potential review of small modular reactor applications.

"There is considerable interest in SMRs. The power level of these reactors would be significantly lower than that of existing reactors. Risk insights from PRAs could help focus resources on the most risk-significant aspects of a SMR design and enhance the safety focus of review guidance in the near term." said Apostolakis.

Jaczko added, "It is important that the NRC work to take steps to be even better prepared to conduct safety focused and effective reviews of potential applications. I appreciate the initiative that Commissioner Apostolakis has shown in this area."

The NRC is currently reviewing 13 COLs for larger pressurized and boiling water reactors. In addition, in recent years there has been an expanding degree of interest expressed in pursuit of design certification, a manufacturing license or a COL for smaller reactors. Reactor vendors are now working on several designs, including for pressurized water reactors and sodium-cooled fast reactors. The Department of Energy's advanced reactor program is placing increased emphasis on molten salt reactors. Domestic utilities are discussing plans to install SMRs, and the Department of Defense is studying the feasibility of using SMRs to power critical military installations.

The NRC has a long-standing policy of encouraging greater use of risk information in its regulatory programs and processes. Examples of valuable risk-informed initiatives include the Reactor Oversight Process and the in-service inspection of reactor piping.

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