

A Guide to Open Commission Meetings



U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20555-0001



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Commission Hearing Room
One White Flint North
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD

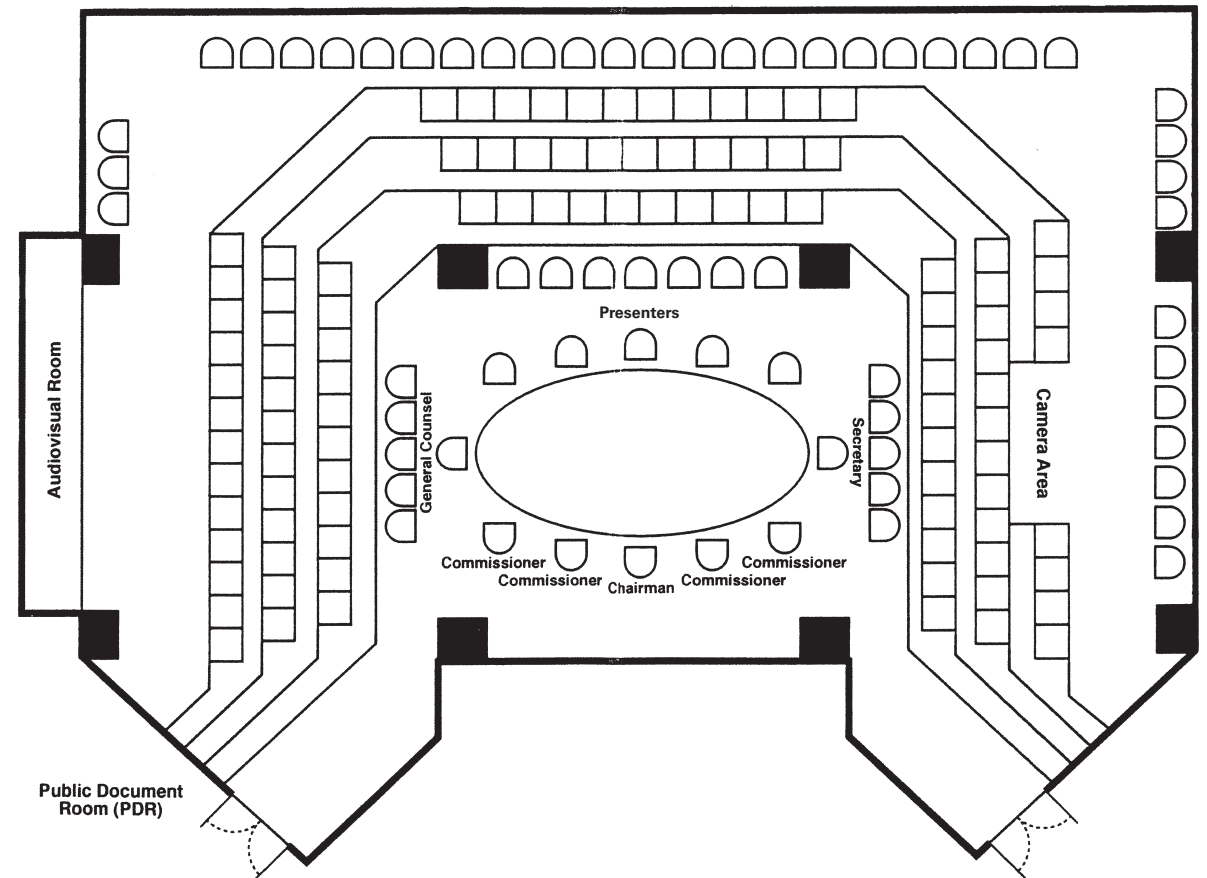


Welcome to NRC Open Commission Meetings

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is committed to conducting its business in an open and transparent way. One way this is done is through public Commission meetings, when the Commission hears from NRC staff and invited panelists, and discusses issues of significant interest to the Commission, stakeholders, and members of the public. The NRC has five Commissioners, each of whom has an equal vote. The Chairman has additional administrative responsibilities that include being the spokesperson for the Commission and chairing the meetings.

About 50 Commission meetings take place each year in the NRC's headquarters building in Rockville, MD. During these meetings, the Commission is briefed on various topics. There is often considerable discussion during the meetings. NRC staff and invited panelists brief the Commission, and the Commissioners question the presenters and talk with one another as they deliberate on the issues before them. They frequently assume an advocacy or opposition role to stimulate conversation, and their remarks do not necessarily reflect their official views.

We hope this guide will help you understand what takes place during Commission meetings.



WHO IS AT THE TABLE?

COMMISSIONERS: The Chairman sits in the center. Other Commissioners sit to his or her left and right.

GENERAL COUNSEL: The General Counsel sits at one end of the table and advises the Commissioners on legal matters that may arise.

SECRETARY: The Secretary of the Commission sits at the other end of the table. The Secretary's office coordinates the meetings and records Commission decisions for public (open) and closed meetings.

NRC STAFF: NRC staff members briefing the Commission sit at the table across from the Commission. Supporting staff are seated behind the briefers to assist them as needed. Questions raised by the Commission are referred to appropriate staff members. The Executive Director for Operations, who is the chief executive officer of the staff and the Commission's agent in directing and coordinating staff activities, sometimes briefs the Commission as well. When that occurs, he or she sits at the center of the table directly across from the Chairman.

STAKEHOLDERS: Outside individuals who have shown interest in a particular meeting topic and could assist the Commission in making its decisions are often invited to give presentations at Commission meetings. Examples include officials from other Federal agencies, States and local communities, Tribal Governments, as well as subject matter experts, representatives from organizations, industry representatives, and individuals who represent a broad spectrum of views and perspectives.

HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT MEETINGS

ANNOUNCING MEETINGS: A listing of 6 weeks of Commission meetings is published each week in the *Federal Register* and posted on the NRC's public Web site (www.nrc.gov/public-involve/public-meetings/schedule.html). The announcements include the time, place, and subject matter of the meeting, and give the contact name and telephone number. Public Commission meetings are also listed on the public meeting schedule (meetings.nrc.gov/pmns/mtg). If an unanticipated meeting is required, the NRC issues an announcement as soon as possible.

OPEN AND CLOSED MEETINGS: Members of the public are welcome to attend and observe all Commission meetings, with some exceptions. There are 10 exceptions to an open meeting rule specified in the Sunshine Act. The NRC generally will close meetings for these reasons/exemptions: classified information, internal personnel matters, information that is exempted by statute, trade secrets, personal privacy, investigatory records, or adjudicatory matters.

IF YOU CAN'T ATTEND IN PERSON: Most open Commission meetings can be viewed through the NRC public Web site (www.nrc.gov), while the meeting is actually taking place (live webcasting with closed captioning), and they are also archived for viewing at a later date. Transcripts of open meetings are posted on the NRC's public Web site and are also available to the public through the NRC's online document system (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS)), and the NRC's Public Document Room.

CONDUCT IN THE HEARING ROOM

So that the business of the Commission can be administered in a fair and orderly fashion, a few standards have been established for behavior in the Commission Hearing Room:

- a. The public may observe, but members of the public are not allowed to participate in Commission meetings unless specifically requested to participate by the Commission in advance of the meeting. According to Federal regulation (41 CFR 102-74.390) disorderly conduct or other conduct that creates loud or unusual noise or a nuisance, impedes or disrupts the performance of official duties by the Commission or its staff, or interferes with the orderly conduct of the scheduled presentations, may result in expulsion from the meeting room.
- b. All signs, banners, posters, etc., smaller than 18 inches square are permitted, but cannot be waved, held over one's head, or generally moved about while in the meeting room. Signs, banners, or posters larger than 18 inches square are not permitted in the meeting room, as they can be disruptive to the participants and the audience. Additionally, signs, banners, posters, etc., affixed to any sticks, poles, or other similar devices are not permitted in the meeting room.
- c. Eating, drinking, or smoking is prohibited in the Commission Hearing Room.
- d. Members of the public may record the meetings from their seats with a battery-operated device. They may also film, photograph, or videotape meetings using cameras in designated fixed positions without additional lighting. Filming by the media is coordinated in advance with the NRC Office of Public Affairs, 301-415-8200.

Copies of slides and other materials used in the presentations are available at the meeting room entrances and are generally available about 5 business days in advance of the meeting on the NRC public Web site (www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/tr/). They are also available about 48 hours after the meeting through ADAMS and through the NRC's Public Document Room. In some instances, the Commission will make the principal staff papers available before the meeting through ADAMS and the NRC's public Web site.

WHAT HAPPENS AT MEETINGS

DIRECTION TO STAFF: The Chairman may summarize the issues discussed in the meeting and, in coordination with the Commissioners, direct certain action, issue instructions to the staff, or direct the staff to submit additional data at some later date.

AFFIRMATION SESSIONS: The Secretary describes the item on which formal voting is to take place, noting the position taken by the Commission. The Commissioners affirm their votes on final rules and orders. Votes are recorded by the Secretary and included in staff requirements memoranda, which are the official minutes of the meeting.

SECURITY REQUIREMENTS: All visitors are screened through metal detectors, and their packages are x-rayed. All visitors age 18 and older are required to present a valid government picture identification card.

The NRC provides reasonable accommodation to participate in these public meetings to individuals with disabilities. Please notify Kimberly Meyer, NRC Disability Program Manager, at 301-287-0739, by videophone at 240-428-3217, or by e-mail at Kimberly.Meyer-Chambers@nrc.gov.

LEGAL CITATIONS:

- a. Government in the Sunshine Act 5 U.S.C 552B.
- b. NRC Rules of Regulations Title 10, *Code of Federal Regulations*, which includes sections 9.100-9.109, NRC's Government in the Sunshine Act Regulations.
- c. General Services Administration Rules, 41 CFR 102-74.390.

For more information about the Commission and its work, visit the NRC Web site at www.nrc.gov or visit the Public Document Room, which is adjacent to the Commission Hearing Room, First Floor, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD.