

Chairman Burns' Remarks at the
Second NRC/DOE Advanced Reactor Workshop
June 7, 2016

I'm happy to be here again for the second of these workshops and to be joined by Under Secretary Dr. Franklin Orr. So welcome back to you and thanks for being part of this workshop this morning.

As you are all aware, the NRC, DOE, and industry have very different roles to play in the development and deployment of innovative technologies. Despite these different roles, there are good reasons for cooperation now while we stay within our respective congressionally mandated roles and responsibilities.

I recognize that applications to license non-light-water reactor technologies may not be on our plate for sometime in the future, perhaps not until the next decade at the earliest. But I believe it is our responsibility to prepare ourselves for that possibility and to strike the right balance – as is our mandate – in allowing innovation while protecting public health and safety.

So where are we?

Within available resources, the NRC staff is pursuing a multi-part strategy to prepare for efficient and timely reviews of non-light-water reactor technologies. For one, the staff has completed the first draft of that strategy and made it available on our public website. The staff will present it at public meeting with the Commission later this month. And as you probably are aware, the President's FY 2017 budget request includes \$5 million in non-fee-recoverable activities to execute this strategy.

If Congress appropriates this funding, it would prepare the NRC to undertake licensing reviews of advanced reactor technologies consistent with the maturity and development pace of the technologies.

Specifically, the NRC would be taking on tasks related to licensing infrastructure, technical preparation, and stakeholder outreach.

Under the licensing infrastructure activities, we would conduct a gap analysis of regulations and guidance to determine areas where revisions are needed, and begin developing revised regulations and guidance for advanced reactors.

We would also complete development of advanced reactor design criteria, evaluate new approaches to review conceptual designs on an incremental basis, and evaluate unique policy issues.

As for our technical preparation activities, the staff intends to look at international design reviews, as opportunities become available, in order to increase our expertise in advanced reactor technology and to obtain lessons learned from advanced reactor technology licensing.

For example, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission will be performing a pre-licensing vendor design review for an advanced molten salt reactor designed by Terrestrial Energy.

Additionally, we would develop proposed revisions to industry codes and standards to address certain advanced reactor designs and develop related requirements. Further, we would conduct a hazard analysis to better understand the potential hazards and safety requirements to prevent or mitigate these hazards. Important outreach activities would include continuing periodic engagements with designers of advanced reactors – perhaps some of you in the room -- participation in standards development for advanced reactors and information sharing with various national and international groups.

In addition, the NRC is working with DOE to implement a process for providing accurate and current information to DOE in support of the Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear (GAIN) initiative.

While being prepared to evaluate potential applications for advanced reactor technologies does present some challenges for the NRC, make no mistake, the agency is ready to receive and review any such applications under our existing framework.

To be clear, the NRC has the necessary licensing and oversight authority over commercial advanced reactors, and is ready to work with potential applicants to prepare for and review applications for these reactors.

Of note, the NRC recently published draft design criteria for advanced reactors on our web site, and we are seeking public comments on the draft document.

The NRC has also recently expanded an existing interagency agreement with DOE for exploring regulatory issues and research needs for novel fuel designs, and we're holding this, our second joint workshop on advanced non-light-water reactors.

I also understand preparations for a potential third workshop are already underway for the fall.

It is critically important that the industry keep the NRC informed of its progress and plans so we can plan appropriately. Given the constraints of our congressionally approved budget, it can be challenging to move resources and re-assign staff to work on unanticipated projects.

In closing, I'd just like to reiterate the NRC's readiness to work with DOE and the industry on licensing new technologies.

As always, the NRC's primary focus will be on protecting the safety of the public in a manner that reflects our Principles of Good Regulation.

I wish you all a successful workshop.