

POLICY ISSUE (Information)

December 28, 2000

SECY-00-0241

For: The Commissioners

From: Stuart Reiter
Acting Chief Information Officer

Subject: IMPROVING THE NRC PUBLIC WEB SITE

Purpose: To report on the status of the project to redesign NRC's public Web site

Discussion: In its last report on the project, SECY-00-0052 (February 29, 2000), the staff described several actions in response to Item 5 of Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) 991109A, concerning NRC's Web page and access to information. This paper provides a further update on one of those actions, the project to redesign NRC's Web site.

Web Site Objectives

As reported in SECY-00-0052, in accordance with the Commission's direction, the staff established the following objectives for the external Web site to support the goals of NRC's Strategic Plan.

- Increase public confidence in the NRC by:
 - ▶ Providing information that enhances the ability of stakeholders to participate effectively in the regulatory process;
 - ▶ Providing information that enhances the public's understanding of NRC's mission, goals, and performance;
 - ▶ Making it easy to find desired information; and
 - ▶ Ensuring the timeliness and accuracy of information at the site.
- Make doing business with the NRC more efficient and effective by providing easy access to necessary information and tools for conducting business electronically via the Web.

These objectives were endorsed by the Executive Council on February 15, 2000.

Contact:
Francine F. Goldberg, OCIO
301-415-7545

Redesign Process

Two groups were formed to provide agencywide input to the redesign effort: a Web Redesign Working Group, composed of staff who currently maintain the NRC's content at our public Web site, and a Web Redesign Steering Committee, composed of Senior Executive Service managers and chaired by a representative from the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. The Steering Committee's charter was stated in a June 29, 2000, memorandum from the Executive Director for Operations and the Chief Information Officer (Attachment 1). The members of the Steering Committee are listed in Attachment 2.

The staff contracted for a usability analysis of the existing Web site. Stakeholders, including representatives of public interest groups, librarians, licensees, State officials, members of the international nuclear regulatory community, and NRC staff who frequently interact with the public were involved in this process through several focus groups, a usability test at last year's Regulatory Information Conference, and a survey. An expert evaluation of how well NRC's current Web site follows best practices and considers human factors, and how accessible it is to individuals with disabilities (in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act) was also done. The staff also compared NRC's Web site with other highly rated government sites. The staff briefed the Web Redesign Working Group, the Web Redesign Steering Committee, the Executive Council, and the Commission staff on these activities. The staff confirmed that there were significant opportunities to improve the site's structure and organization, navigability, style, understandability, and accessibility. The recommendations included:

- create a "common look and feel" for the entire NRC Web site (enforce standards);
- organize by content and topic rather than by NRC organizational structure;
- give information on nuclear facilities by State;
- use top-down logic going from the general to the specific;
- make navigation consistent (links to top-level pages, within-page navigational devices, and links to external non-NRC sites); and
- comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (test pages on multiple platforms and with browsers favored by people with disabilities).

The results of these assessments formed the basis for the next step: developing a prototype for the redesigned Web site. The purpose of the prototype is to demonstrate the major content areas, organization, and look and feel of the redesigned site. As such, the major focus is on the higher level pages. In addition, representative example pages were developed at the lower levels. The rest of the lower level pages will be completed during the implementation phase. The prototype received three rounds of formal review: by the NRC Web staff, the Web Redesign Working Group, and the Web Redesign Steering Committee. The

working group and steering committee each were formally briefed on the prototype. They submitted roughly 350 comments on the prototype. Each group met to discuss major comments and resolve the significant issues.

Status of the Prototype

The prototype has been demonstrated to the Executive Council and the Commission staff. It can be found at the NRC internal Web site at [nrcweb:83](#). The prototype has the following improvements over the existing site:

- improved organization of information;
- top-down logic;
- multiple views of information (by function, program, location, and audience), instead of an “office-centric” approach;
- consistent navigation and “common look and feel”;
- more appealing design;
- a clear explanation of what NRC does;
- greater visibility of frequently accessed information;
- home for high-interest, but transient issues;
- plain language; and
- compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Additional Stakeholder Involvement

The staff is obtaining an OMB clearance to collect input on the prototype from stakeholders in early 2001. The clearance will permit the staff to use an on-line survey to solicit input on the prototype from both the stakeholders who were involved in the initial usability study as well as others who wish to participate. This will be the final review of the prototype before public implementation. The staff will announce the availability of the prototype for review, develop a plan to inform the public of NRC efforts, and help make the transition to the new site as seamless as possible for stakeholders who rely on NRC’s current Web site.

Implementation Plan

Once comments are received from stakeholders and the Commission, the staff will review the comments and develop the schedule for incorporating the changes in two phases.

The intent of phase I is to expand the prototype to include the content that exists at the current public site and incorporate comments that can be accommodated relatively easily without investing in new technology. In Phase I the staff will populate the prototype with all document collections currently available at the existing public Web site and with most of the static content. The staff is reviewing and checking the quality of all the existing material as part of the process of mapping it to the new design. In a few cases, the staff may eliminate information

that is obsolete, duplicated, or not cost-effective to maintain. Those activities that require a longer lead time and investments in new technology will be deferred until Phase II. Examples are creating the "Facilities by State" subsite and applying the new standards to NRC Web domains maintained at DOE laboratories. In Phase I, only the first page of these DOE-hosted sites, which include our rulemaking forum, technical conferences, State and Tribal Programs activities, and occupational radiation exposure at NRC licensed facilities will be changed to conform to the new standards. The schedule for and cost of Phase I will be determined after the staff has mapped contents of the existing Web site to the prototype. Assuming there are no major changes to the structure and organization of the site based on input from the Commission and stakeholders, and no major changes to the estimated scope of Phase I as a result of the mapping of the existing content, the staff plans to deploy Phase I during the 4th quarter of this fiscal year. There will be no major investments in hardware or software in Phase I. If additional resources are needed to complete Phase I, they will be allocated through the normal planning, budgeting, and performance management (PBPM) process.

In Phase II, the redesigned site will be enhanced with new features that require a longer lead time or investment in new technology. Phase II will create a "Facilities by State" subsite which will include the capability to display documents such as event reports, enforcement actions, and news releases by facility. In addition, the staff will consider how to better integrate the NRC Web sites hosted at DOE laboratories with the new NRC Web site. Also in Phase II, the staff will consider acquisition of a Web content management tool. This tool would allow the "dynamic retrieval" of information needed to implement the concept of "Facilities by State," automate some standards and some data quality assurance checks, reduce content maintenance resource needs (by eliminating the need for HTML coding), and facilitate management controls. Commission and stakeholder comments that require major new features such as the dynamic retrieval of information or other technology investments would also be addressed during Phase II. The staff will propose a business case for any significant hardware and software investments needed in Phase II. Necessary resources for Phase II will be identified through the normal Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) process and the PBPM process.

Relationship to ADAMS

The new design positions the Web site for integration with any future Web-based version of the Agencywide Document Access and Management System (ADAMS) by physically locating all documents and document collections together in a single subsite -- the Public Reading Room. By localizing the documents rather than scattering them around the site, it will be easier to replace them with documents from ADAMS when a Web-based version is available. Although documents will be physically stored together, they can be referenced from anywhere at the site through hypertext links.

Standards, Management Controls, and Training

The staff recognizes that several initiatives are needed to maintain the integrity of the new NRC Web site and ensure the timeliness and accuracy of information at the site. Three initiatives are planned or in progress to do so.

The first is to develop Web standards and templates that specify the format of any new material added to the site. These standards and templates will help maintain a "common look and feel" and ensure that the site complies with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The second initiative is to develop management controls to specify roles, responsibilities, and accountability for Web site contents and adherence to standards. In accordance with its charter, the Web Redesign Steering Committee has taken an active role in this area. A subcommittee of representatives from EDO, SECY, OPA, NRR, NMSS, RES, and OCIO has developed draft management controls and presented them for review by the full Committee. The resulting version will be circulated for office comment and will be incorporated into a Web Management Directive to be published early next year. As part of expanding the prototype to include all existing content, a detailed table of Web page ownership is under development. This table will identify the owner of every static page and document collection at the Web site. This will clarify accountability and resource requirements in time for decision making during the upcoming budget cycle. Any resource issues associated with maintenance of the site will be identified and addressed.

The third initiative is to develop a training course for staff and contractors who develop or maintain information at the redesigned Web site. The course, which is being developed jointly by OCIO and HR, will incorporate the standards and management controls and will be offered at the Professional Development Center.

Coordination

This paper reflects comments of the Web Redesign Steering Committee and has been coordinated with the EDO and CFO.

Attachments:

1. Memorandum from William D. Travers and Stuart Reiter, "Steering Committee for NRC's Public Web Site," June 29, 2000.
2. Web Redesign Steering Committee Members

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OFFICE	PSB/IMD/OCIO	IMD/OCIO	ACIO	CFO	EDO
NAME	W. Oliu: WEO	F. Goldberg: FFG	S. Reiter: SR	J. Funches: JLF	W. Travers: JC
DATE	12/ 05 /2000	12/ 06 /2000	12/ 13/2000	12/ 27 /2000	12/ 27 /2000