Integrated Regulatory Review Service Mission to the United States

MODULE 3: RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE REGULATORY BODY

Overview

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is the Federal agency primarily responsible for the safe operation of commercial nuclear facilities in the United States. The NRC operates as an independent regulatory body whose mission is to license and regulate the civilian use of byproduct, source, and special nuclear materials in order to protect the public health and safety, promote the common defense and security, and protect the environment.

The NRC's functions of licensing, review and assessment, inspection, and enforcement are organized to ensure consistency and to enable feedback and the exchange of information. In 1975, the Atomic Energy Commission was reorganized into two Federal agencies: the Energy Research and Development Administration (the precursor to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)) and the NRC. DOE's mission is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States and to promote scientific and technological innovation in support of that mission.

The NRC's organization is structured into Headquarters-based offices, which have responsibility for regulations and guides, reviews and assessment, reactor licensing, and policy and program development, and regional offices, which implement the inspection, enforcement, and assessment programs. Personnel with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to carry out their assigned regulatory activities staff each office. The NRC's structure and composition has adapted over the years to accommodate emerging challenges. The Executive Director for Operations has a support staff that ensures effective coordination of the various disciplines, roles, and responsibilities of the offices.

The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) is responsible for accomplishing key components of the NRC's nuclear reactor safety mission. As such, NRR conducts a broad range of regulatory activities in the four primary program areas of rulemaking, licensing, oversight, and incident response for commercial nuclear power reactors, and test and research reactors to protect the public health, safety, and the environment. NRR works with the regions and other offices to accomplish its mission and contribute to the agency mission. The Regional offices implement the inspection, assessment, and enforcement programs in accordance with chapters of the NRC Inspection Manual and inspection procedures to ensure consistent oversight of reactor facilities.

Organizational Structure of the Regulatory Body and Allocation of Resources

> *The regulatory body shall structure its organization and manage its resources so as to discharge its responsibilities and to perform its functions effectively; this shall be accomplished in a manner commensurate with the radiation risks associated with facilities and activities. (GS-R-1, Requirement 16)*

NRC Organization

The Commission

A five-member Commission heads the NRC. Each Commissioner is nominated by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for a 5-year term. The President designates one member to serve as Chairman, the principal executive officer and official spokesperson of the Commission. The members' terms are staggered so that one Commissioner's term expires on June 30 every year. No more than three Commissioners can belong to the same political party.

The Commission as a whole formulates policies and regulations governing nuclear reactor and materials safety, issues orders to licensees, and adjudicates legal matters brought before it.

Offices Reporting Directly to the Commission

Office of the Executive Director for Operations. The Executive Director for Operations is the chief operational and administrative officer of the Commission and is authorized and directed to discharge such licensing, regulatory, and administrative functions and to take such actions as necessary for day-to-day operations of the agency. The Executive Director supervises and coordinates policy development and operational activities of NRC program and regional offices and implements Commission policy directives pertaining to these offices.

Office of the Chief Financial Officer. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the NRC's planning and budgeting and performance management process and for all NRC financial management activities.

Office of the General Counsel. The Office of the General Counsel provides legal advice to the Commission and other agency officials and employees on all aspects of the regulatory and administrative functions and programs of the NRC and represents the agency in administrative and judicial proceedings.

Office of the Inspector General. Although under the general supervision of the NRC Chairman, this office operates with personnel, contracting, and budget authority independent of that of the NRC. The Inspector General serves as an independent and objective unit to provide leadership and policy direction in conducting audits and investigations to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the NRC and to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in agency programs and operations.

Office of International Programs. This office coordinates the NRC's international activities and provides assistance and recommendations to the Chairman, the Commission, and the NRC staff. It plans, develops, and implements programs to carry out policies in the international arena, including export and import licensing responsibilities. It establishes and maintains working relationships with individual countries and international nuclear organizations, as well as with other involved U.S. Government agencies.

Office of Public Affairs. The Office of Public Affairs directs the agency's public affairs program, advising agency officials and developing key strategies that help increase public confidence in NRC policies and activities.

Office of Congressional Affairs. The Office of Congressional Affairs is the primary point of contact for all communications between the NRC and Congress. This office advises and assists the Chairman, Commission, and NRC staff on congressional matters; monitors legislative proposals, bills, and hearings; informs the NRC of the views of Congress on NRC policies, plans, and activities; responds to congressional requests for information; and provides the information necessary to keep appropriate Members of Congress and congressional staff fully and currently informed of NRC actions.

The Office of Commission Appellate Adjudication. This office provides the Commission with an analysis of any adjudicatory matter requiring a Commission decision and drafts decisions pursuant to the Commission's guidance after presentation of options.

Office of the Secretary of the Commission. This office provides executive management services to support the Commission and to carry out Commission decisions. It assists with the planning, scheduling, and conduct of Commission business; maintains historical paper files of official Commission records; administers the NRC Historical Program; and maintains the Commission's official adjudicatory and rulemaking dockets.

The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards provides the Commission with independent and timely technical advice on issues of public safety related to nuclear reactors, reactor safeguards, and nuclear waste and materials management issues. The Committee reviews and advises the Commission with regard to the licensing and operation of production and utilization facilities and related safety issues, the adequacy of proposed reactor safety standards, technical and policy issues related to the licensing of evolutionary and passive plant designs, and other matters referred to it by the Commission.

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board. The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board conducts hearings for the Commission and performs such other regulatory functions as the Commission authorizes. The Chief Administrative Judge develops and applies procedures governing the activities of boards, administrative judges, and administrative law judges, and makes appropriate recommendations to the Commission concerning the rules governing the conduct of hearings.

Offices of the Executive Director for Operations

The offices reporting to the Executive Director for Operations ensure safety in the commercial use of nuclear materials in the United States.

Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) is responsible for key components of the NRC's nuclear reactor safety mission. To do so, NRR conducts a broad range of regulatory activities in the four primary program areas of rulemaking, licensing, oversight, and incident response for commercial nuclear power reactors and test and research reactors to protect the public health, safety, and the environment.

Office of New Reactors. This office is responsible for key components of the NRC's nuclear reactor safety mission for new reactor facilities licensed in accordance with Commission regulations. As such, the Office of New Reactors is responsible for regulatory activities in the primary program areas of siting, licensing, and oversight for new commercial nuclear power reactors.

Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards. This office is responsible for regulating activities that provide for the safe and secure production of nuclear fuel used in commercial nuclear reactors; the safe storage, transportation, and disposal of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel; and the transportation of radioactive materials regulated under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended.

Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response. This office develops overall agency policy and provides management direction for evaluating and assessing technical issues involving security and emergency preparedness at nuclear facilities.

Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research. This office plans, recommends, and conducts research programs to identify, lead, and sponsor reviews that support the resolution of ongoing and future safety issues.

Regional Offices. The four regional offices conduct inspection, enforcement, and emergency response programs in U.S. nuclear reactor facilities. Their responsibilities include the resident inspector program.

Office of Enforcement. This office oversees, manages, and directs the development and implementation of policies and programs for enforcing NRC requirements. It oversees the agency's allegations management programs and the allegations review process. The office is responsible for external safety culture policy matters, the agency's Alternative Dispute Resolution program, internal Differing Professional Opinions Program, and internal nonconcurrence process.

Office of Investigations. This office develops policy, procedures, and quality control standards for investigations of licensees and applicants, as well as their contractors or vendors, including the investigation of all allegations of wrongdoing by non-NRC employees and contractors.

Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs. This office is responsible for effective communications and working relationships between the NRC and other governmental entities and administers the Agreement State Program (through which States sign formal agreements with the NRC to assume regulatory responsibility over certain byproduct, source, and small quantities of special nuclear material). It also develops and implements rules and guidance for the safe and secure use of source, byproduct, and special nuclear material in industrial, medical, academic, and commercial activities and at decommissioning, uranium recovery, and low-level waste sites.

Office of Information Services. This office plans, directs, and oversees the delivery of centralized information technology infrastructure, applications, and information management services, in addition to the development and implementation of information technology and management plans, architecture, and policies to support the mission, goals, and priorities of the agency.

Office of Administration. This office provides centralized services in the areas of contracts, facilities and security, property management and administrative services, including rulemaking and agency directives support, transportation, parking, translations, audiovisual support, food services, mail distribution, labor services, and furniture and supplies.

Office of Human Resources. The Office of Human Resources provides overall leadership and management of the agency's human capital planning and the agency's training and

development programs. Accordingly, this office is responsible for implementing human resource policy and operations agencywide. This includes overseeing the development and implementation of human resources management and information systems for staffing, strategic workforce planning, and other corporate activities to support a skilled and dynamic workforce. The office's training and development programs are designed to establish, maintain, and enhance the skills that employees need today and to meet the agency's skill needs for the future.

Office of Small Business and Civil Rights. This office facilitates equal employment opportunity for all NRC employees and applicants for employment through an ongoing affirmative employment and diversity management process that supports valuing and utilizing all employees regardless of differences. Primarily, this office develops and manages the following programs: the NRC's Equal Employment Opportunity; Affirmative Employment and Diversity Management; Civil Rights; Outreach and Compliance Coordination, and Small Business program.

Computer Security Office. This office plans, directs, and oversees the implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, integrated, and cost-effective NRC information technology security program, consistent with applicable laws and regulations; directions from the Commission, Executive Director for Operations, and Chief Information Officer; and management initiatives and policies.

Allocation of Resources

As of the end of the fiscal year in 2008 and 2009, the financial condition of the NRC was sound with respect to having sufficient funds to meet program needs and adequate control of these funds in place to ensure that obligations do not exceed budget authority. The sum of all funds available to obligate for fiscal year (FY) 2009 was $1,165.2 million, which is a $136.4 million increase over the FY 2008 amount of $1,028.8 million.

The NRC's FY 2011 budget will be financed with $915.3 million from user fees, $128.3 million from the General Fund, and $10.0 million from the Nuclear Waste Fund, for a total of $1,053.6 million. The budget represents a $13.3 million decrease from the FY 2010 budget of $1,066.9 million enacted by Congress last year. Decreases from the FY 2010 budget are primarily the result of decreases in the high-level waste repository program and a decrease in the number of operating nuclear power plant license renewal applications expected in FY 2011.

These resources are made available to the NRC through enactment of appropriations by the U.S. Congress. The NRC submits annual budget requests to Congress for subsequent fiscal year funding. A new budget process has been recently implemented to enhance this activity. Once appropriated funds are provided, the NRC maintains a system that administratively controls funds to ensure that budgetary resources are properly distributed and controlled.

The NRC conducts an annual review of the resources (funds and manpower) needed to support its mission and to develop the NRC's annual budget request. If changes are made, senior management is informed of the impact of the changes, and expectations are set accordingly.

In addition to the budget, specific performance measures and milestones necessary to complete the NRC mission are developed. The NRC's performance against these milestones and resultant resource use is tracked in monthly performance reports and is part of budget execution. The performance criteria and milestones are examined each fiscal year and

adjusted as necessary to reflect changes in priorities and unexpected events. Adjustments are made throughout the fiscal year to accommodate the actual workload in the fiscal year and to accommodate emergent work.

Effective Independence during Conduct of Regulatory Activities

> *The regulatory body shall perform its functions in a manner that does not compromise its effective independence. (GS-R-1, Requirement 17)*

The Commission's status as an independent regulatory agency within the executive branch of the Federal Government means that the President cannot ordinarily direct its regulatory decisions. (By law, however, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget reviews the proposed NRC budget.) Likewise, Congress cannot override the Commission's decisions, except by duly enacted legislation. Congress, courts, other Federal agencies, and State governmental entities generally defer to the Commission's safety judgments and regulations.
The independence of the NRC's decisionmaking process imposes responsibility on the part of the Commissioners and their personal staffs to keep the NRC's decisionmaking process free from improper outside influence. This is especially important in the case of adjudications. When the Commissioners take part in adjudications, they ordinarily act in the role of appellate judges (reviewing the decisions of lower judges) and, in general, are bound by the same kinds of strictures that apply to judges in Federal courts.

Staffing and Competence of the Regulatory Body

> *The regulatory body shall employ a sufficient number of qualified and competent staff, commensurate with the nature and the number of facilities and activities to be regulated, to perform its functions and to discharge its responsibilities. (GS-R-1, Requirement 18)*

The NRC has in place a 5-year Strategic Human Capital Plan that constitutes the framework for managing the NRC's human resources through 2013. The NRC is using a variety of strategies to maintain and bolster its knowledge and skills during a period when many experienced staff members are becoming eligible to retire, and current and new NRC employees need the benefit of their knowledge. In July 2006, the Human Capital Council was established as an agency-level forum to formulate strategies to address human capital challenges, share best practices, and develop an integrated approach to addressing human capital issues.

The NRC has made substantial progress in implementing a variety of initiatives and tools to create a knowledge-sharing culture, including the NRC Knowledge Center, an agencywide collection of electronic communities of practice designed to enable staff to collaborate, capture, and share knowledge in order to build organizational memory, and an expertise exchange to capture the lessons learned and best practices from the NRC's most experienced staff.

The agency's dedicated Technical Training Center provides extensive structured training in power plant design, systems, operations and other specialized topics including hands-on simulator training for multiple designs. As gaps in knowledge, skills and abilities are identified, additional training modules are developed and implemented.

The NRC has established several training programs, covering various functions within the regulatory body, to ensure that the staff is suitably qualified and experienced. For example, the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation developed a qualification program for its technical staff.

The goal of the qualification program is to prepare employees to perform regulatory duties and implement the agency's policies, programs, and activities associated with the regulation of nuclear reactors. The qualification plans help ensure that the staff is well versed in the regulatory framework and in agency processes, practices, and procedures relevant to the staff member's position. The staff's technical skills are also addressed through the combination of the NRC's criteria for employee's educational credentials and technical training particular to each employee's position. Each job category has position-specific, high-level qualifications. The technical qualification programs culminate in the employee's appearance before an oral board as a final program requirement. In addition, there is a structured, disciplined "on-the-job" training associated with the inspection function.

Each technical division within the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation has identified branch-specific training plans, which focus on ensuring that employees have appropriate technical skills and knowledge. These training plans are primarily for new employees. The more basic training modules may be taken as part of the initial qualification effort, but more advanced and specialized training modules are also available, which can be tailored to an individual employee's prior background and current or future job responsibilities. External training opportunities are also widely available at academic institutions or through commercial vendors.

Liaison with Advisory Bodies and Support Organizations

> *The regulatory body shall obtain technical or other expert professional advice or services as necessary in support of its regulatory functions, but this shall not relieve the regulatory body of its assigned responsibilities.*
> *(GS-R-1, Requirement 20)*

The NRC makes wide use of advisory committees to enhance its regulatory process. The advice provided by the committees, however, is not binding and does not relieve the NRC of its responsibility to make regulatory decisions. All committee reports are published and made publicly available, unless the reports meet one of the exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act. The NRC's advisory committees always act as a group and not as individual experts providing an opinion. The committees are governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which is implemented through NRC regulations at 10 CFR Part 7, "Advisory Committees," which define the policies and procedures to establish, use, and terminate advisory committees.

The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) is established as a statutory committee. A 1957 amendment to the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 established the Committee to advise the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the licensing body at the time. Sections 29 and 182b of the Atomic Energy Act describe the functions of the committee. The Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 transferred the AEC's licensing functions to the NRC, and the Committee has continued serving in the same advisory role to the NRC as it did for the AEC.

The ACRS comprises a maximum of 15 members who have both broad and specific technical expertise in areas such as probabilistic risk assessment, thermal-hydraulics, and materials science. Members generally have years of experience and come from National Laboratories, universities, other branches of the Federal Government, or the nuclear industry. Full-time technical experts and administrative staff support the Committee. The Commission appoints ACRS members, who serve up to 4 years. At its discretion, the Commission can renew appointments. Members are generally selected on the basis of the Committee's technical needs and technical balance within the Committee.

The Committee also advises the Commission on safety-significant policy issues and performs other duties as the Commission may request. The Committee provides its advice both orally at meetings with the Commission, regulatory staff, and associated stakeholders or as letter reports, which document ACRS observations and recommendations.

Liaison between the Regulatory Body and Authorized Parties

> *The regulatory body shall establish formal and informal mechanisms of communication with authorized parties on all safety related issues, conducting a professional and constructive liaison. (GS-R-1, Requirement 21)*

The NRC maintains an excellent relationship with its many stakeholders including licensees, nuclear industry, the public, Congress, and other governmental bodies. The relationship is both formal and informal and conducted openly and transparently.

The NRC maintains a good relationship with its licensees in that the relationship is both formal and candid. The NRC formally issues its regulatory products (e.g., rules, guidance, amendments, licenses, exemptions, inspection reports), yet NRC personnel maintain frequent contact with licensee personnel, which allows for more candid discussion. This is particularly true for the project managers who are stationed in NRC Headquarters, and the resident inspectors who are assigned to various nuclear facilities. These personnel are able to perform their function objectively, in an official capacity, and yet maintain open and frequent day-to-day interactions with licensee personnel on a less formal basis.

It is NRC policy to rotate resident inspectors after they have completed a tour of 7 years at a facility (utility). The reasons are to achieve the advantages of a periodic "new perspective" or "fresh look" by the NRC's onsite representative, to gain the opportunity to use the experience of the departing resident inspectors elsewhere in the NRC, and to ensure that the objectivity of the resident inspectors is maintained.

Stability and Consistency of Regulatory Control

> *The regulatory body shall ensure that regulatory control is stable and consistent. (GS-R-1, Requirement 22)*

The NRC's functions of licensing, review and assessment, inspection, and enforcement are organized to ensure consistency and to enable the necessary feedback and exchange of information. In 1975, the AEC was reorganized into two Federal agencies: the Energy Research and Development Administration (precursor to DOE) and the NRC. DOE's mission is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States and to promote scientific and technological innovation in support of that mission. The NRC is responsible for the safe operation of commercial nuclear facilities in the United States. The NRC is an independent Federal agency, and a balance of political affiliation amongst the Commissioners ensures relative stability in the agency's policies. As such, the NRC operates as an independent regulatory body whose mission (to protect public health and safety) is stable and consistent.

The NRC's organization is structured into Headquarters-based offices, which have responsibility for regulations and guides, reviews and assessment, reactor licensing, and policy and program development, and regional offices, which implement the inspection, enforcement, and assessment programs. Staffing each office are personnel with the knowledge, skills, and

experience necessary to carry out their assigned regulatory activities. The NRC's structure and composition have evolved over the years to accommodate emerging challenges. The Executive Director for Operations has a support staff that ensures effective coordination of the various disciplines, roles, and responsibilities of the offices. Regional offices implement the inspection, assessment, and enforcement programs in accordance with chapters of the NRC Inspection Manual and inspection procedures to ensure consistent oversight of reactor facilities. Additionally, regional management holds periodic counterpart meetings with regional inspectors, and regional management holds periodic phone calls and meetings with Headquarters management to identify improvements and to promote consistency.

The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation is responsible for issuing facility operating licenses; writing rules, regulations, and associated guidance documents; developing and maintaining an inspection and oversight program; collecting and disseminating data on domestic and international operating experience; and providing technical expertise in radiation protection, engineering, human performance, and a number of other disciplines. The Office of Enforcement is responsible for developing and maintaining the NRC's enforcement policies and associated guidance. The Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research provides technical assets and research capabilities across varied and diverse disciplines. The NRC regional offices have the primary responsibility for the implementation of the NRC inspection program at power reactor sites within the regions' geographical area. The regional office implements the inspection program for each reactor facility using the NRC Reactor Oversight Process (ROP) as described in Inspection Manual Chapter 2515, "Light-Water Reactor Inspection Program—Operations Phase." The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, in turn, performs an annual performance review of the regional implementation of the ROP. The regional office normally provides the resources used to complete the ROP. Specialists in reactor risk assessment or representatives from the NRC Office of Enforcement normally support the regional office effort, depending on the severity, significance, and complexity of an issue.

Reporting processes and communications links between the regional and Headquarters offices reinforce the information exchange. For example, the publicly accessible NRC Web page for the ROP has active links to all power reactor assessments and inspection schedules and results. The input data for the facility assessments, including inspection report information and performance indicators, are linked to those Web pages. The NRC offices share databases that allow the offices to be linked and share information. These include the Office of Enforcement listing of enforcement actions and databases for licensee event reports, human factors information, and reactor operating experience. The Reactor Operating Experience Gateway provides access to a wide scope of current and historical information, including reports and trending systems. In addition, the internal feedback process, as described in Inspection Manual Chapter 0801, "Reactor Oversight Process Feedback Program," provides a useful means for the NRC staff to identify concerns or issues and recommend improvements related to ROP policies, procedures, or guidance. This closed-loop process ensures that identified issues or concerns are resolved and/or explained in order to continuously improve program effectiveness.

Safety-Related Records

> *The regulatory body shall make provision for establishing, maintaining and retrieving adequate records relating to the safety of facilities and activities. (GS-R-1, Requirement 35)*

There are several licensee requirements for maintaining safety-related records. Most notable is Appendix A to the license, "Technical Specifications," which contains recordkeeping

requirements (e.g., records of offsite dose calculations). Additionally, various regulations (e.g., 10 CFR Part 20, "Standards for Protection against Radiation," Subpart L, "Records," requires, among other things, that records be kept of such things as occupational exposures and releases of radioactive effluents to the environment.

Appendix B to the license contains some requirements for environmental reporting. Numerous reports are required by NRC regulation (e.g., 10 CFR 50.71, "Maintenance of Records, Making of Reports," with particular emphasis on subsection (e), which requires that the licensee's final safety analysis report be kept up to date).

It is the NRC's policy that all official records made or received by NRC in the course of its official business comply with the regulations governing Federal records management issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the General Services Administration (GSA). All internally and externally generated records and documents are processed, maintained, distributed, made available to the public, and preserved or destroyed, as appropriate. The Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) maintains appropriate NRC unclassified, non-Safeguards, official program-related records in a centralized electronic records repository. NRC's publicly available documents are made available to the public via NRC's external Web site and the ADAMS public libraries.

In addition, in April 2010, the NRC issued its first formal Open Government Plan, which reiterated the NRC's longstanding commitment to openness and outlined plans for new transparency, participation, and collaboration initiatives using web-based technology. After incorporating feedback received from the public and other stakeholders, the NRC issued Revision 1.1 of its Open Government Plan on June 7, 2010.

Communication and Consultation with Interested Parties

> *The regulatory body shall promote the establishment of appropriate means of informing and consulting interested parties and the public about the possible radiation risks associated with facilities and activities, and about the processes and decisions of the regulatory body. (GS-R-1, Requirement 36)*

The NRC actively seeks external stakeholder interactions on many issues. The agency embraces a policy of openness with respect to public scrutiny of its regulatory processes and products. When a regulatory safety decision is involved, these interactions follow a formal process. Somewhat less formal communication methods are also available when more general issues are involved that would benefit from staff and stakeholder interaction and would foster effective communication. Commission guidance for these processes is also in place.

For communications with other external stakeholders, such as Congress and other Federal agencies, the NRC provides formal reports (e.g., the Performance and Accountability Report) and letters and makes these reports available to the public. For issues of significant public interest, the NRC develops specific communication plans, which include identification of all internal and external stakeholders, the purpose of actions and communications, and the communication tools employed to achieve openness. Communication tools include holding public meetings, either in the vicinity of nuclear facilities or at NRC Headquarters or regional offices, issuing press releases (e.g., upon receipt of a significant licensing action), or developing and maintaining Web pages on the NRC's external Web site.

The NRC ensures open communication in a variety of ways. With the exception of security and proprietary information, the agency shares written documents, guidance, and communication with all internal and external stakeholders. The external NRC Web site and the Agencywide Documents Access and Management System are the NRC's principal means of communicating public information about agency activities. In addition, to complement the agency's public outreach activities, the NRC has an established process to respond promptly to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act.

Assessment Summary

As part of the Complimentary Self-Assessment, NRC staff reviewed its programs against IAEA's goals and objectives, and found them to be consistent.

Since its establishment in 1975 by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, NRC has evolved into a mature and effective regulatory body regulating the nation's civilian use of the nuclear energy to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety, to promote the common defense and security, and to protect the environment. The NRC is an independent regulatory agency within the executive branch of the U.S. federal government. The NRC has the authority, resources, and highly competent technical staff it needs to carry out its regulatory functions in licensing, review and assessment, inspection and enforcement to ensure the safe operation of commercial nuclear facilities in the United States of America.

The NRC's status as an independent agency in the Executive Branch keeps the NRC's decisionmaking process free from improper outside influence. The NRC has a well-developed regulatory framework for the issuance, amendment, suspension, and revocation of licenses consistent with its mission to regulate civil use of nuclear power to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety, promote the common defense and security, and protect the environment.

The NRC has adequate resources to support its mission and has sufficient funds to meet NRC's program needs and adequate control of these funds to fulfill its mission.

The NRC has made substantial progress in implementing a variety of initiatives and tools to create a knowledge-sharing culture. To ensure that all NRC staff is suitably qualified and trained, the NRC has established several training programs that include staff qualification programs, on-the-job training, and rotational assignments. These programs promote the technical development and growth of the NRC staff.

The NRC makes wide use of advisory committees to enhance its regulatory process. These committees play an important role in advising the Commission on safety-significant policy issues.

There are explicit regulatory requirements for maintaining safety-related records for the licensees. There are also explicit policies and processes to maintain the official records made or received by the NRC. In addition, the NRC issued its first formal Open Government Plan, which reiterated the NRC's longstanding commitment to openness and outlined plans for new transparency, participation, and collaboration initiatives using web-based technology.

The NRC maintains an excellent relationship with its many stakeholders that include licensees, nuclear industry, the public, Congress, and other federal agencies. The NRC actively seeks feedback on many regulatory issues both internally and externally to continuously improve its

regulatory process. The NRC has policies and procedures in place to ensure the openness of NRC's regulatory processes.