



NRC NEWS

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Moving Forward for Safety

Remarks by
The Honorable Gregory B. Jaczko
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
at
The Regulatory Information Conference
Rockville, MD
March 13, 2012

Good morning everyone. I want to welcome everyone to the 24th Annual Regulatory Information Conference (RIC). It is a tremendous honor for me to address the RIC for the eighth time. On behalf of my Commission colleagues, I would like to thank Eric Leeds, Brian Sheron, and their staffs in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research for making this event possible. Believe it or not, the people who are planning next year's event are already at work. This is an effort that takes the entire year, and the dedication of a tremendous number of people. We certainly appreciate all of their efforts in this regard. As you can see by looking around the room, our attendance this year is at record levels, and more than 30 countries have sent representatives to this event. The RIC continues to be an invaluable forum for us to share information and exchange views about recent developments and emerging issues central to nuclear safety and security.

Beyond the Commission and the staff directly involved in the planning of this event, the RIC would not be successful without the collaboration, hard work and support of staff from across the agency. But of course this event is just one of the many challenges facing the staff and the nuclear industry. Whether here in Rockville, in one of the regions, at the technical training center, or in a telecommute location, sometimes somewhere in the world – whether you are a technical reviewer, inspector, manager, administrative professional or an individual representing one of the many other disciplines – our staff works each day to protect public health and safety and the environment, to carry out the NRC's very important mission.

I would like to just take moment to talk about the year that we have had. It has certainly been a year of significant challenge, but what I have seen throughout is a dedication and a focus

to the mission. We have dealt with challenges both external and internal, and throughout, the staff has shown a dedication to the mission and the Commission has shown a dedication to the mission.

My longest-serving colleague, Commissioner Kristine Svinicki, continues her focus on the details that make us an effective regulator. Commissioner Apostolakis, in addition to the work we have all done, has spent the last year working on ways to enhance and improve our use of probabilistic risk assessment and I believe he will be talking about the results of that work today. Commissioner Magwood brings extensive experience with the Department of Energy and has used his considerable knowledge of the nuclear field to advance our regulatory mission, as well as our outreach to stakeholders. And I think an interesting point that he made the other day is that he has 13 years of experience as a political appointee in the Federal Government – That is a tremendous amount of experience that brings to bear on the work that we do. Commissioner Ostendorff's broad background – including his long service with the nuclear Navy, and assignments at the House Armed Services Committee, and the National Nuclear Security Administration – has brought important perspectives that have helped us tackle difficult challenges like the issue of cyber security and many others.

LOOKING BACK ON 2011

Looking back on this year, I think very few of us at this time at last year's RIC were prepared for the events that were going to unfold in the nuclear community that affected the entire world. It has certainly been a challenging year for all of us. We met here, at the RIC conference, just over one year ago, and looked ahead with one view of the future. Five days later, that image changed completely. The nuclear industry faced a string of natural disasters during the past year, both here and abroad, that affected it in unique and in profound ways. If there is a silver lining in all that occurred in the past year, I think one of the most telling moments is the way that the international community pulled together to help our friends and colleagues in Japan during an enormously difficult time.

Here in the United States, within two weeks of the events in Japan, the NRC launched a Near Term Task Force, at the request of President Obama, to evaluate the lessons learned from Fukushima. And that has set us on a path to address the major issues facing the nuclear power industry in this country and it is a piece of the work that is going on internationally. And many times I have talked about these issues and I have stressed the importance of not expecting to follow business as usual. So today I am going to talk a little bit about that, in looking back at some of the challenges we faced through the lens of two very important concepts. And the first and most important is this – the notion of reactive and proactive approaches to solving safety challenges.

At the onset, I would say that as an agency, and as an industry, we are very good at dealing in a reactive mode. Where there is a clear issue and a clear challenge, we come to solutions and come to resolution very quickly and in a timely way in the best interest of nuclear safety. Where I think our challenges remain is in the proactive work, in continuing to address proactively safety concerns that may not have the same "burning platform" so to speak, or the

immediate incident that drives the need for a resolution and a solution. But I want to be clear that I think this agency and the nuclear industry in the United States continues to be a world leader for the magnitude of its strengths and for the limitations of its weaknesses.

So let me begin by looking back a bit on some of those incidents that drove the work that we do. I am going to talk first about some of the incidents in the United States and a very good example of the challenges of a reactive approach versus a proactive approach that can best be seen with some of the issues we dealt with in the flooding in the Midwest United States.

Of course many of you are familiar with the iconic images of Fort Calhoun Nuclear Power Station surrounded by flood waters, almost appearing as a true nuclear island in the middle of these flood waters. I think this is both an example of the strength of our reactive approach to nuclear safety, as well as the proactive work of our inspectors and our oversight. Prior to the flooding events, the NRC inspectors had identified significant challenges with the flood protection program at Fort Calhoun. And it was through their work, their diligence, and their proactive efforts that enhancements and improvements were made to Fort Calhoun. Those enhancements and improvements provided vital in dealing with the flooding levels experienced later that year. And I think an important contrast to Fort Calhoun is Cooper Nuclear Station, which is just down river. Now when I went out to visit Fort Calhoun, I also visited Cooper Station. There were no television shows, no images of Cooper at the time, because Cooper had been built in a slightly different location in an area well above the likely flood levels that we were seeing in that year of record and historic flooding.

So I think there is a lesson in there and I think it is emblematic of some of the efforts we have made in the past in proactive design ideas and where we have been successful and in areas where we have been not as successful. And if I think you compare Fort Calhoun to Cooper, you will see clear examples of a better approach to the design basis when it comes to flooding than the other.

And that is not to say that one was wrong or one was right, but I think there are important lessons for us there as we look forward. We continue to be challenged in the area of natural hazards and how best to design plants to deal with natural hazards. But I think if you look back from the same perspective, proactively we have done a very good job of building in conservatisms. And it has been those conservatisms in the margin that has been so beneficial and has been tested so much in the last year.

No sooner did the flood waters begin to recede than hurricane season started up in the East Coast, resulting in Hurricane Irene making landfall and affecting several nuclear stations near the coast. We also saw tornados impacting the Brown's Ferry and Surry facilities, fortunately without causing extensive damage. These incidents represented recognition of the conservatisms in the design of nuclear plants around our country and the strong program developed in this country for preparing for emergencies at nuclear facilities. I think it is yet another example of the successes of our proactive efforts to deal with nuclear incidents and to deal with nuclear design.

I want to turn to one last incident that was driven by external factors and that was the earthquake that registered 5.8 on the Richter scale that occurred in the neighboring state of Virginia. Now compared to the other earthquake we had dealt with in the last year, this seems insignificant. But certainly for those of you who were here in Rockville - I was on the 18th floor having a video conference with Victor McCree. He will probably forever have that image of me looking around somewhat shocked and surprised by what was going on and just getting up and leaving the room to figure out what was going on. The operator came back a few moments later and said I think we are having an earthquake – we'll call you later.

While this was not a significant event in terms of the magnitude of the earthquake relative to other earthquakes, it certainly was significant relative to the design basis for North Anna. And I think this is a very good example of the strengths of the agency and the industry when it comes to our reactive approach to dealing with issues. In the case of North Anna, it was a very challenging situation because we had never dealt with an operating unit that had experienced an earthquake that had exceeded its safe shutdown, or “design basis” earthquake. It required us to use guidance that had been developed many years earlier. It required us to develop a new approach to determining whether or not it was appropriate for the plant to restart, whether its safety systems or guidance and regulations could meet their functional requirements. I think the work that the staff did, working with the licensee, demonstrated our ability—given a specific challenge at a specific facility, in that reactive mode—to make very good progress in a timely way.

Now I think if you contrast that with the more generic issue of seismic redesign and seismic basis reanalysis that will affect almost all nuclear power plants on the central and eastern part of the United States, and eventually the plants on the west coast, we see a much different story. This is an issue that will require many years to develop, that has now been rolled into our efforts to deal with post-Fukushima responses, and will be a challenge I think for us to approach. And I think the fundamental difference there is that we don't have an immediate precursor, we don't have an immediate event driving the need for change. I believe it represents one of the challenges that we then have in these areas of proactive planning and proactive approaches to dealing with safety and security.

While I think the staff and the industry and the Federal Government was on the right track, recognizing that there were updated and enhanced ways of looking at earthquakes in the central and eastern United States, we had not made that much progress prior to the North Anna earthquake. But again it was the margin that was built into the plants from the original design, and the original licensing work that was done, that allowed North Anna to deal with the earthquake with minimal to no damage despite the fact that the magnitude in some frequencies and some accelerations exceeded the design of that facility.

In looking back on those external events, I think we have a good sense of where there is reactive work that was done, and again I think some of the best work that is done in the regulatory arena is the reactive work done by this agency and by this industry. And I think if you look at these incidents, you see challenges in the proactive and the need to continue to find ways for us to solve problems in a proactive way and move the work forward.

Last year not all the NRC's work was driven by natural disasters. There were also tremendous successes for the agency. Most notably, the agency conducted its first mandatory hearings as required by Part 52 on Vogtle Unit 3 & 4 and the VC Summer Unit 2 & 3. This was a tremendous effort by the Commission and the staff to prepare for those many-day hearings. It is often forgotten that all this work was done several months after Fukushima, while there was a tremendous amount of other work going on, yet the agency was able to continue to focus on the other activities and work that was so important for us. This effort, I believe, was a culmination of the proactive efforts of the Commission going back to the late 1980s and early 1990s to develop an enhanced regulatory framework that would allow us to look at the licensing, construction and operation at the same time. I think the hearings were the culmination of a tremendous amount of work by the staff and the applicants to review the applications, to do a thorough analysis, and ultimately to make good regulatory decisions.

Just last month, the Commission culminated the licensing work on Vogtle by issuing the first Combined License for Vogtle Units 3 & 4 using the AP1000 design. This is the first new reactor license issued in the United States in a long time. The challenge now for the new reactors will turn to the proactive work of preparing for construction. And there will be challenges, there will be issues that arise that we are not prepared for. I am confident, however, that with our skills in reacting to incidents and reacting to challenges in the licensing and construction arena, that we will deal with those, but it will certainly will require a concerted effort from the NRC, from the licensees and also members of the public. As we look forward, we continue to need to be focused on the proactive work to ensure that our construction oversight process is effective, that the implementation of ITAAC will be successful, and ultimately that the plant as constructed will be safe and in conformance with the licenses approved by the Commission this year.

Now one area that I want to turn to, which I think was a tremendous proactive effort on the part of the agency, and perhaps there is a lesson in here for us, was the work on the Safety Culture Policy Statement. In early 2011, the Commission published a Safety Culture Policy Statement. I think this policy statement is a testament to the common ground and the strength of the nuclear community's shared commitment to safety. And that involved the NRC, licensees, and the many stakeholders who were involved in the development of that Policy Statement. I can tell you personally, that when the Commission began the process to develop this Policy Statement, I did not anticipate the broad spectrum of stakeholders – from our licensees, who are often some of our biggest critics, to public interest groups, who are also some of our biggest critics – that today actively support it. And to see all of those stakeholders and the staff come together and agree on a common framework and a common language for the Safety Culture Policy Statement, is one of the most important successes for proactive safety oversight and regulation that has been accomplished since I have been on the Commission.

We also completed rulemaking that enhances the emergency preparedness of our nation's nuclear power plants. This rule, drafted in cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, strengthens nuclear power plants' preparations and defenses against hostile action events. It also ensures more protection for employees at these stations, as well as the communities that surround them, by improving the reliability of public notification systems and enhancing other emergency planning elements. And again, I want to just go back and remind you all that we finalized this rule, in the middle of our Fukushima response, but because of the work

we had done to develop this rule—and in many ways it was a reaction to September 11th—it was a way to enhance and improve our emergency response and emergency preparedness programs following the events of September 11th.

We had in place a good rule that, in fact, has some advantages and provides some assistance in dealing with Fukushima challenges. And I think a key for both of these efforts and these initiatives was the intensive level of stakeholder outreach that we did. The EP rule involved a variety of different stakeholders from state and local governments, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Agreement States. It was a tremendously diverse stakeholder community that we had to get some consensus from, in order to move forward with this rule. In many ways, it was the same theme that led to the success of the Safety Culture Policy Statement. So as we look at these issues, I think that a thread emerges that in the proactive areas, the more we can strive for consensus, the more that we can achieve agreement and consensus among the many stakeholders that are involved in our process, the easier time we have of bringing these issues to conclusion.

Now I want to touch on an area where I think we have a tremendous opportunity for these proactive efforts, and that, of course, is in the area of our continued oversight of the nuclear power fleet. While I have spoken of our many unique challenges and successes of the past year, and their strengths and weaknesses, I must always reiterate that the safety and security of existing reactors, and the other facilities and materials we regulate, will always be our number one priority. The commitment of the Commission, the staff, and our many stakeholders to this important principle is one—if not the greatest—strengths of our regulatory system. But we must always ensure that *safety is always our number one priority*.

This past year has certainly tested that principle. The Fukushima events had the ability or the potential to distract us from our oversight of the fleet of reactors of this country. But I am pleased to say that the staff did not lose their focus and attention on any of these issues. In 2011, we ended the year with three plants in Column 3 of the Reactor Oversight Process, one plant in Column 4, and one plant in an extended shutdown and subject to the Manual Chapter 0350 process, the first time we have used that in many, many years. What this demonstrates to me, is that the staff did not lose their focus and their attention on our number one priority, which is the safety and security of our nuclear power reactors.

But the challenge that we will always continue to have with our oversight program—and one where there are simply questions, but at this point no answers—is how we take our reactor oversight process, which is an excellent tool for reactive oversight, and make it an even stronger tool for proactive oversight. I am reminded of a Commission meeting earlier this year about Fort Calhoun and Commissioner Apostolakis asked a question about performance indicators, and whether we could find a leading indicator of plant performance. I almost chuckled when he said that as I could remember a meeting many years before, dealing with Palo Verde, when I asked almost the exact same question. It is an obvious weakness in our reactor oversight program, and it is one that has no easy answers. But ideally what we would love is a reactor oversight process that can predict declining performance and not just measure declining performance. And that is a challenge that we will continue to work on and continue to struggle with. But it is not to say that the reactor oversight process is not an incredibly effective tool for oversight. I believe it is.

But I think that we all agree that if we could find a way to have leading indicators, it would provide a better system for regulation.

Now as we look forward, in the area of proactive thinking, we also have to continue to address the challenges with human performance that are of significant concern. For example, in this last year we had special inspections related to operator performance during either startup or test conditions that reflected poor control over plant reactivity. These are performance issues which should not occur in such a mature industry. We must be careful that we properly heed these data points. While they may not yet provide a true signal of problems, or are an indication of true declining performance, they are indicative of issues that bear watching.

I want to take a moment at this point to recognize one of the true proactive strengths of the nuclear power industry in this country, and that is the work of the Institute for Nuclear Power Operations. In the response to the crisis in Fukushima, INPO once again demonstrated its strengths and its effectiveness as an organization for excellence in nuclear safety. This is a time of change, and at INPO we will see a transition as Jim Ellis moves on, and a new leader takes over. But I know throughout there will be continuity and a continued focus on excellence that is the hallmark of INPO and their work in the nuclear power industry.

As we look at these human performance issues, I think it is extremely important to keep our focus on proactively identifying those. I had an opportunity this year to visit a nuclear power plant, the South Texas Project, and talk to them about knowledge management. Knowledge management is a key proactive element in ensuring that we continue to maintain the knowledge base that has been accumulated over many, many decades in nuclear safety, and that we pass that on to the new generation of workers that is coming into the nuclear industry, to ensure that we have learned the lessons of the past and that we continue to address new challenges in a proactive way.

POST-FUKUSHIMA NEAR-TERM TASK FORCE FINDINGS AND PROGRESS

Now this leads me to my next point, perhaps one of the most significant issues that we will have to deal with in a proactive perspective, and that is dealing with the response to the Fukushima accident. The one-year anniversary of the tragic earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident in Japan is a poignant reminder of the importance of our work for nuclear safety in the United States. Our Incident Response staff had thought through—and drilled many times—on communication, facilitation, and logistics for a postulated nuclear emergency. So when the Fukushima crisis occurred, we were prepared to address the issues.

That freed up our staff to analyze the technical data, to make recommendations to the Ambassador in Japan, as well as to the Japanese government and our colleagues in Japan as they needed it. It enabled us to dispatch more than a dozen staff members to Japan in the days and weeks after the event and I was extremely impressed by their efforts and dedication in the days and weeks after March 11. I cannot thank them enough for all the work they did to address that issue.

But I also have to say thank you to all the other staff who maintained their focus on the number one priority of safety and security, whether they were administrative professionals helping out with travel arrangements, or technical staff working extra time, working overnight, addressing the Fukushima or other licensing and oversight challenges that came in front of us.

Within two weeks of the earthquake, tsunami and the resulting nuclear accident, the Commission established a senior-level agency Task Force to address and review lessons learned from the Fukushima event. I want to thank that Task Force for the work that they did in setting us on a course to address the lessons learned and begin the process. In the spirit of March Madness, the basketball tournament that began earlier this year than normal, we are somewhere in the early rounds of the tournament. And our goal is the Final Four, and to make sure that we can accomplish the work that we need to do in a timely and effective way. I want to applaud the level of participation from all interested stakeholders, their valuable contributions and perspectives, and their willingness to accommodate tight timelines.

Since all of the Task Force recommendations could not be pursued simultaneously, the staff developed, and the Commission approved, a three-tiered prioritization system for the recommendations. Work is progressing actively on the Tier I recommendations, which are actions the staff and the Commission considered could be taken without delay. Orders implementing the first of these recommendations were just issued by the agency, and I congratulate the staff and the Commission on this important milestone. But, while it is one year after the events at Fukushima, as I said, we are only now implementing the first series of orders on matters that the staff recommended be implemented without delay. It is crucial that we continue to move forward in a timely and in a proactive manner on these events.

While these initiating events are of very low likelihood, the events at Fukushima reinforced that any nuclear accident with public health and safety or environmental consequences of that magnitude is inherently unacceptable. While we focused on the radiological consequences of this event, I believe we cannot ignore the large social and economic consequences such an event poses to any country with a nuclear facility that deals with such a crisis. In Japan, more than 90,000 people remain displaced from their homes and land, with some having little prospect for a return to their previous lifestyle in the foreseeable future. While not easy to characterize, these are significant hardships, and they are inherently unacceptable.

So as we look to the future, and we look in a proactive way, we ultimately will have to address the issue of how we deal with significant nuclear events that lead to significant land contamination and displacement, perhaps permanently, of people from their homes and their livelihoods and their communities. These are difficult questions that do not have simple answers, but they are ultimately issues that we have to address now while they are fresh in our minds. Any nuclear accident that happens like Fukushima in this country will be unacceptable.

Despite the conservatism in the margins that ultimately protect people from receiving radiation doses that are unlikely if ever to lead to any type of immediate health impact, we must ask ourselves a very fundamental question: "Is it acceptable to have significant releases of radioactive material even if there are only very minor latent health effects?" This is, as I said, a very difficult question. I think the answer, if asked today, based on our safety goals, would be

that, “yes, it is acceptable.” But based on the concern, focus and effort of the industry, the agency and the public after the Fukushima accident, I believe that quite clearly the true answer to this question is, “no.” And that means a significant reevaluation of our regulatory philosophy. This is a challenge that will take many, many years to address if we do not put the appropriate focus and attention to it. And I remind you, all of this will have to happen on top of all of the other immediate reactive work that we have to do to deal with Fukushima.

So as I said, the “Final Four” for Fukushima is still many years in front of us. We have made significant progress, and again I want to thank the staff, the industry and stakeholders for their efforts to make the progress we have made to this date, and of course the Commission, for their ability to act promptly on these very significant matters. While the items we directed were to be taken without delay, it remains important not to lose sight of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 items. These items were recommendations not necessarily of lower priority, but which required competing resources or additional research or previous regulatory decisions to be made in order to be addressed. But I want to be very clear, they were not necessarily lower priority. We can’t lose focus on our efforts to complete those actions in a timely way.

I have stressed the importance of completing all of these actions within five years. At this point, with some of the 50.54f letters we have issued, we are a little bit behind that schedule. And I think one of the things we need to focus on is ways we can accelerate and complete that work in a more timely way. Because five years from now, the challenges we face may be very different and may require our immediate attention to address new issues that we have not yet identified. We will need, in the long term, to ultimately tackle issues with the use of probabilistic risk assessment, issues that will require tremendous infrastructure investment. And it is important that we have the resources and the ability to deal with those issues while not dealing simultaneously with the challenges from Fukushima.

To that end, I look forward to the staff’s continued work on the Fukushima items, and I encourage everyone to continue to look for ways that we can make progress on these issues in proactive way and within a five year time frame.

LOOKING FORWARD

Now as I have said, due to events largely beyond our control, we spent much of the year in a reactive mode. That is not ultimately where we want to be on an ongoing basis. And I wanted to give you some examples of where we have done a very good job of being proactive.

One of the most important areas, and an area that often doesn’t get as much attention, is cyber security. This is an area where in which proactive and reactive are almost simultaneous because things change so quickly. But the work we have done to implement the cyber security rule, to require plants to submit their cyber security plans, has put us in a good position to deal with this evolving and emerging security concern. All plants now have submitted their plans, and it is our job to review those, and ultimately for changes and improvements to be made. But this is an area where we must continue to be forward looking, because the nature of the threat changes in such a short time frame.

At the same time that we are dealing with these specific challenges, I think we are doing a very good job of continuing to maintain and enhance our infrastructure. And here at the NRC, that ultimately means the people that we have. And that means making sure that they have the right resources, whether it is physical infrastructure or training opportunities to ensure that they can continue to perform at a high level. And of course we are doing all of this in an era when the budgets are not as full as they used to be. But our safety mission has not changed one bit.

With the construction of our third Headquarters building at Three White Flint North, we are making visible, concrete progress on a change that will ultimately bring us back together as an organization. We plan to move into this new facility later this year. So by next year's RIC, perhaps instead of tours of the Operations Center in Two White Flint, you will be seeing tours of the Operations Center in Three White Flint.

This is also a time for proactive work and effort in the area of spent nuclear fuel. The Blue Ribbon Commission, established by Secretary of Energy Chu, has given us a clear path on which to finally tackle the issues of a geologic repository. It detailed its recommendations for creating a safe, long-term solution for managing and disposing of the nation's spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. But I would stress this is an area in which the proactive efforts of the NRC, to ensure that we have a framework to maintain spent fuel safely and securely, are extremely important. The work that the Commission did several years ago to embark on an enhanced research program for extended spent fuel storage and transportation is only paying dividends now, as we deal with the uncertainty of no definite, long-term geologic repository.

Finally, I can't give a speech at the RIC without talking about some of the long-standing generic safety issues that continue to be a challenge for us. Fire protection and the Generic Safety Issue 191—on PWR sump design—have been before this agency for quite some time. And in the last year we have seen new issues brought forward – 50.54(f) letters on fuel analysis issues. So the issues that are out there continue to come before us and continue to need resolution. This is why it is imperative that we bring to resolution issues like fire protection and the sump performance.

I think the last year has been a year of significant progress on NFPA 805. We have seen the completion of the pilot plants - Shearon Harris and Oconee – and we have seen a number of new applications for transition to NFPA 805. We must maintain this momentum and work on through these applications and ultimately bring this issue to closure.

On the issue of GSI-191, I think the progress has been less obvious. We continue to have new, experimental information that raises concerns about the performance of all of our systems in the event of a Loss of Coolant Accident that leads to significant generation of debris. While licensees have made considerable modifications to their facilities already, this recent industry testing shows that challenges remain. It is my hope that a path to finally close out this issue will be reached this year. This has been a case where we have been moving two steps back and one step forward for too many years. We need to finally cross the finish line.

By definitively resolving issues such as these, we will be in a stronger position to move forward on other existing priorities and proactively plan for the emerging issues that will come before us and for proactively making the regulatory infrastructure changes that will be necessary in the future.

In the area of licensing, I think it has been a year of tremendous success. The agency approved two amendments to design certifications, for the AP1000 and ABWR, and issued the first ever combined operating licenses. In addition, the staff issued the proposed rule for the ESBWR design certification, completed the ITAAC maintenance rulemaking, and made significant progress on several policy issues related to advanced reactors. And, of course, these actions were done first and foremost with safety in mind.

With the issuance of the first COLs and subsequent start of safety-related construction at Vogtle, the NRC is fully prepared to implement its construction inspection program. But in the spirit of proactive planning and thinking, there will be challenges, there will be weaknesses in the ITAAC process. We all need to be flexible and adaptable as these issues come up and resolve them in the most timely way possible.

This is also a time in which we are looking to potentially a new generation and new type of nuclear reactor in this country, with the development of small modular reactors. And I think that the work we have done to prepare the agency to receive those applications has put us in a good position when those applications are finally delivered to review them with a strong focus on nuclear safety and security.

SUMMARY

In summary, as I hope my remarks have made clear, the NRC has had a challenging but productive year in 2011. We certainly have a full agenda for the year ahead, even without the Fukushima events. There will be significant technical and policy decisions that the agency will have to work through, most particularly those related to Fukushima lessons learned. I'm sure these issues will elicit a broad range of views, both inside and outside the agency. That type of debate is healthy and productive, and helps to ensure that we reach the best decisions for nuclear safety.

But in the midst of these debates, it is important that we not lose sight of the common ground we do share, and of our ability to bridge whatever differences there are through our shared commitment to safety.

Thank you, and I wish you a very interesting and informative RIC 2012.