

**Waiver of \$500,000 Single Conference Limitation from  
Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-12-12,  
"Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations"**

As Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I hereby waive, for the 2016 Regulatory Information Conference (RIC), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proscription on spending over \$500,000 on a single conference. The NRC will hold the next annual RIC in March 2016.

The OMB Memorandum M-12-12, "Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," dated May 11, 2012, states that an agency shall not incur net expenses greater than \$500,000 on a single conference; however, the memorandum also states that the "agency head may provide a waiver from this policy if it is determined that exceptional circumstances exist whereby spending in excess of \$500,000 on a single conference is the most cost effective option to achieve a compelling purpose." For the reasons detailed below, I have determined that exceptional circumstances exist whereby spending in excess of \$500,000 on hosting the 2016 RIC is the most cost-effective option to achieve a compelling purpose.

The NRC's mission is to "license and regulate the Nation's civilian use of byproduct, source, and special nuclear materials to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety, promote the common defense and security, and protect the environment." The RIC supports this mission, as well as the NRC's commitment to conducting its work openly and transparently, by providing a unique forum that brings together diverse groups of stakeholders to inform them of significant policy decisions and regulatory oversight activities. The RIC is highly valued by both the agency and external stakeholders for its technical and educational content. In addition, the RIC offers an environment in which NRC staff and stakeholders share relevant information, exchange views and perspectives, and raise concerns about the important safety, security, and policy issues before the agency. As we continue to learn from recent events and natural disasters, this forum is crucial to the mission of the agency.

Since its inception in 1987, the RIC has grown to become one of the premier nuclear conferences of its kind in the world. It is widely attended, bringing together approximately 3,000 participants from nearly 35 countries. Participants include members of the public; Federal, State, and local government officials; nuclear safety regulators from other nations; experts from the national laboratories; advocacy groups; media representatives; licensees; vendors; and other interested stakeholders. The technical program features nuclear experts from across the agency, as well as external speakers from industry, academia, public interest groups, and the international community. This educational conference also provides an exceptional opportunity for attendees to hear firsthand the views of each member of the Commission related to emerging regulatory issues and policy matters.

The RIC provides to the NRC the opportunity to cultivate international relationships, influence nuclear safety on a global scale, and foster the exchange of best practices in the nuclear arena. The face-to-face interaction with members of industry, private interest groups, and other stakeholders is vital and provides wide-ranging opportunities to network, share ideas, raise issues or concerns, search for solutions, and establish relationships with colleagues from around the world.

The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) and the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research co-sponsor the RIC. Both offices are dedicated to the NRC's commitment to responsible fiscal stewardship. NRR as the lead office, diligently scrutinizes and monitors every aspect of the planning, logistics, and implementation to ensure that the agency spends all funds in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. Successfully executing a conference as large and complex as the RIC requires extensive coordination and effective management of resources.

NRR relies on two contracts to assist in the execution of the RIC: (1) the planning and logistical support contract (small business concern -- contractor under SSA's 8(a) program), and (2) the conference facility contract. These contracts cover Web development and hosting, registration, and audio visual support, onsite logistics, and conference facility meeting space. The total cost for both contracts is approximately \$750,000 each year.

In-house resources from the NRC's Office of Administration, Office of Information Services, Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel, and Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer are also involved in providing agency-wide coordination of technical program content and development, Web support, design and production of both electronic and hard-copy conference materials, preregistration activities, and onsite staffing. The RIC takes advantage of existing NRC enterprise-wide contracts for support in information technology security, broadcast coordination and testing, onsite physical security, reasonable accommodations, transcription services, and shipping and delivery activities. Expenses for these services are approximately \$175,000 per year.

The conference facility (Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center) is located across the street from NRC headquarters and is within close walking distance from the White Flint Metro Station. This proximity to both NRC headquarters and public transportation greatly reduces travel and per diem costs for most Federal conference attendees, as well as the travel costs for planners during conference preparation. The benefits of being located near the NRC and on the Metro line are threefold: (1) it enables NRC staff to attend only the conference portions that are valuable to them and to return to their workplaces for the remainder of each day; (2) it allows the NRC to use its own headquarters facility for some of the needed additional meeting spaces at no additional cost; and (3) it enables NRC staff to conduct nonconference business with international counterparts that might otherwise necessitate international travel (further reducing travel costs for the NRC).

The compelling purpose achieved by the RIC constitutes exceptional circumstances. On this basis, I am confident that the costs associated with executing the 2016 RIC are valid and prudent. Therefore, in accordance with OMB Memorandum M-12-12, I hereby waive the \$500,000 single conference limitation for the 2016 RIC.

  
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Chairman Burns

  
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