

April 28, 2016

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland  
Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Carper:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of March 24, 2016, seeking additional information regarding the NRC's work on advanced nuclear reactors. Responses to your specific information requests are enclosed.

The recent interest in developing advanced reactor technologies (defined herein as non-light-water reactors or "non-LWRs") has prompted renewed focus from both the commercial sector and the NRC on the regulatory approach for licensing these new technologies. As I have said on numerous occasions, and as you note in your letter, the NRC can license these new technologies using our existing regulatory framework. This approach would continue to ensure safe, secure, and environmentally responsible uses of nuclear power. However, the NRC is also considering the extent to which enhancements to the existing framework could increase the efficiency, timeliness, and predictability of such reviews.

Consistent with available NRC resources, the NRC is pursuing a multi-part strategy to prepare the NRC to conduct efficient and timely reviews of non-LWR technologies. This strategy emphasizes the following: (1) enhancing our regulatory infrastructure and processes to be able to conduct efficient reviews of non-LWR technologies, consistent with our safety, security, and environmental responsibilities; (2) improving our technical readiness to conduct the reviews; and (3) engaging our various stakeholders to provide them timely and relevant information and to make sure we understand their diverse needs and interests. I would be pleased to share our strategy with you when it is complete; I expect it to be available sometime this summer.

Also as you note in your letter, the Government Accountability Office has reported that the overall development costs for a new reactor could reach \$1 to \$2 billion. It is important to note that the costs directly attributable to the NRC's regulatory review efforts are only a small portion of this total. However, we recognize the importance of developing and implementing a regulatory review process that is efficient and does not impose unnecessary financial or schedule burdens.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the NRC's activities; I hope the information I have enclosed is useful to you. If you need any additional information, please contact me or Eugene Dacus, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

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Stephen G. Burns

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson