

The U.S. Government Accountability Office Report Entitled, Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Additional Action Needed to Improve Process for Billing Licensees
March 2018
(GAO-18-318)

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), in its report, "Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Additional Action Needed to Improve Process for Billing Licensees" provided five recommendations to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The status of the actions taken by the NRC in response to the GAO recommendation is provided below.

Recommendation 1:

Formally communicate to all licensees that supplemental billing information including biweekly reports and monthly status reports on contractor charges is available and how to request it. Formal communication that would reach all licensees could include adding information to their quarterly invoices.

Status:

The NRC formally communicated to licensees on the invoices issued in January 2019 that they may request additional information by submitting the NRC Form 527, "Request for Information Related to Contractor Charges in Accordance with 10 CFR 170.51" which was developed in response to Recommendation 2 of this GAO report. This information will continue to be communicated on future invoices.

The NRC considers this GAO recommendation to be closed.

Recommendation 2:

Develop policy and guidance for staff on what billing information related to contractor charges NRC staff can provide to licensees and how it should be provided.

Status:

The NRC developed a formalized process, as well as policy and guidance for NRC staff related to releasing billing information on contractor charges. The NRC financial system used to pay contractors and generate licensee invoices does not capture the level of contractor charge detail requested by licensees; therefore, we are unable to provide that level of detailed information on the invoice. However, contractors provide additional details in the form of a status report, which is typically sent monthly to the technical staff responsible for oversight of the contract work. Since the contractor monthly status reports contain sensitive and proprietary information, the NRC developed policy and guidance for staff related to releasing information on contractor charges to licensees. In addition, NRC developed a form for licensees to request additional information on contractor charges on their bill, NRC Form 527: "Request for Information Related to Contractor Charges – In Accordance with 10 CFR § 170.51" which is available on NRC's public website.

The NRC considers this GAO recommendation to be closed.

Recommendation 3:

As the NRC transitions to electronic billing, develop a project plan that incorporates standards for project management, which includes establishing plans for schedule and cost.

Status:

The NRC completed the electronic billing (eBilling) project plan and baselined it on December 19, 2018.

The NRC considers this GAO recommendation to be closed.

Recommendation 4:

In developing the project plan for electronic billing, include steps to involve licensees in developing system capabilities, which includes soliciting and considering licensees' information needs.

Status:

The NRC initiated outreach to a sampling of licensees to understand their system requirements for an eBilling application. The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) provided a list of licensees who assisted the NRC in the initial requirements gathering. During the development phase, the NRC will continue to work with a sampling of licensees who have agreed to participate in various project activities.

In November 2018, the NRC conducted eBilling User Experience sessions with each of its nine licensees who agreed to participate in the eBilling development efforts. The nine licensees were shown "concepts screens" of the eBilling application that were developed based on the requirements received from the NRC internal and external (sampling of Licensees) stakeholders. The licensees were walked through the screens and given an opportunity to provide their feedback on the aesthetics and functionality of each screen. The results of the User Experience Sessions were documented in the January 17, 2019 NRC eBilling User Experience Sessions Report and provided to NRC management for review.

The nine licensees will also participate in the two eBilling Pilot efforts targeted for May 2019 and July 2019. They will be going into the eBilling application and testing its functionality and intuitiveness and providing feedback to the NRC eBilling team. The feedback from the first Pilot will be incorporated into the second Pilot. The results from the second Pilot are anticipated to be "fine tuning" in nature. The eBilling team provides the nine licensees with monthly updates on the progress of the eBilling efforts via email communications for their awareness and planning purposes.

The NRC considers this GAO recommendation to be closed.

Recommendation 5:

In developing the project plan for electronic billing, include steps to assess the results of implementing electronic billing, which includes comparing the actual performance to intended outcomes.

Status:

The NRC continues to access the metrics that will provide the most value and will incorporate them into the baselined project plan. Potential areas for metrics to assess the effectiveness of the eBilling solution include; payment timeliness, billing dispute resolution timeliness, and licensee participation rates in eBilling.

This GAO recommendation remains open.