

# RESPONSIVENESS TO THE PUBLIC

Final Report



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U.S. Nuclear Regulatory  
Commission

*J.F. O'Neil*

JANUARY 1996

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NUREG/BR-0199

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## INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has sought to conduct its business activities in an open and public manner. We define the public to be individual citizens, public interest groups, petitioners, those whom we regulate (our licensees), industry groups, agency contractors, the Congress, and all others with whom we do business.

In recent years NRC has attempted to be more open and responsive to the public. We have expanded our use of public workshops to get early comment on rulemaking activities; we have established electronic bulletin boards that allow the public an easy way to comment on proposed rules (e.g., the enhanced participatory rulemaking); and we have surveyed our licensees to get their ideas on ways to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden. We also have established the Cost Beneficial Licensing Action Program,<sup>1</sup> made improvements to the 2.206 petition process (the primary mechanism for the public to raise potential health and safety issues in regard to licensed facilities); and initiated a pilot program for opening predecisional enforcement conferences<sup>2</sup> to the public. However, while these initiatives represent significant improvements, they are not enough. We had two additional major concerns: responsiveness to the public did not get priority attention in all NRC programs, nor had there been a systematic review of NRC business activities to identify those where improvements could or should be made.

Vice President Gore's Report of the National Performance Review dated September 7, 1993, placed new emphasis on Federal agencies "putting the customer first." In this spirit, on July 27, 1994, the NRC Executive Director for Operations launched the Public Responsiveness Initiative by asking NRC office directors to identify those business activities where public interaction is relatively frequent and to develop "Public Responsiveness Improvement Plans." This report discusses the

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<sup>1</sup>The CBLA program provides a more expeditious review of and increased NRC management attention to licensee requests that seek to modify or delete requirements that have a small effect on safety and are costly to implement.

<sup>2</sup>A predecisional enforcement conference is a meeting between the NRC and a licensee. Its purpose is to obtain information that will assist the NRC in determining the appropriate enforcement action, including the reason for the apparent violations, the apparent root cause, and the licensee's corrective actions. The decision to hold an enforcement conference does not mean that the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken.

initial results of that effort and contains office improvement plans. These plans were published in the *Federal Register* on March 31, 1995, for public comment. Comments were received from more than 30 individuals. We appreciate the time those persons took to review the draft report and provide comments. We have responded directly to each person. Comments were taken into consideration and, as appropriate, we have made adjustments and improvements to the plans. Copies of the comments and responses are on file in the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC.

We consider public responsiveness an ongoing process. As we gain experience from implementing the activities described in this document, we are likely to expand some, discontinue others, and consider new ones.

All publications mentioned in this report are available to the public. Publications in the NUREG series (NUREG-XXXX) and Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* are available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 37082, Washington, DC 20402-9328. NRC Management Directives are available for review and copying at a nominal fee at the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE CHANGES**

### **NRC Policy on Assuring Responsiveness to the Public**

It is the policy of the NRC to be responsive to the public. The public includes individual citizens, public interest groups, petitioners, licensees, industry groups, contractors, the Congress, and all with whom we do business. Responsiveness entails

- structuring NRC business activities to facilitate and encourage public participation,
- making NRC documents readily available to the public through public document rooms and electronic media,
- responding in a timely manner to business requests and public inquiries,
- responding to the public in a professional and courteous manner, and
- understanding and respecting the impact that NRC activities can have on those with whom we do business.

### **NRC Policy on Public Access to Documents**

The policy of the NRC is to make as much information as possible available to the public relating to NRC's health and safety mission, in accordance with its legal responsibility to protect some types of information. It is the intent of the NRC to automatically make documents publicly available that are anticipated to be of interest to the public without anyone needing to file a Freedom of Information Act request.

The agency will review the types of documents that are of public interest that are not now routinely placed in the NRC Public Document Room (PDR) and local public document rooms (LPDRs). To the extent that categories of documents can be identified that are likely to be of interest to the public, NRC will expand the scope of information routinely disclosed. To this end, the NRC will make information

available to the PDR and LPDRs whenever it is known or anticipated that there is or will be public interest in such information, except when there is a legitimate need to safeguard the information.

On occasion a document that has a requirement for protection and also has known or potential interest to the public can be released, in whole or in part, as a result of declassification or disclosures under the Freedom of Information Act. In these cases, the NRC will make the document or a portion thereof available to the public by placing it in the PDR and LPDRs.

## **Staff Orientation and Training**

### ***Background***

The NRC will make every effort to respond to the needs of the public in a timely and professional manner. To emphasize the importance of this effort, the NRC will incorporate the concept of public responsiveness into all of its activities. For instance, the NRC plans to modify its **Orientation for New Employees** to include a segment on responsiveness to the public.

The NRC will take the following actions to ensure that its employees have the necessary training and tools to better serve the public:

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Complete the revisions to the following materials and/or courses to factor in responsiveness: the video, **The NRC Story**; and the courses **Conducting and Participating in Meetings**; **Effective Briefing Techniques**; **The Media Training Workshop**; and **Supervising Human Resources**.
- (2) Inform the staff about the importance of public responsiveness through such courses as **Effective Communications for NRC Inspectors**; **Gathering Inspection Information Through Interviews**; **NRC: What It Is and What It Does**; and **The Regulatory Process**.
- (3) Inform the staff of the availability of university-sponsored and other courses on effective relations with the public.

- (4) Improve telephone communication and etiquette by providing guidelines to employees on how to answer and handle telephone calls.
- (5) Revamp the NRC telephone directories so that employees may quickly locate information and direct calls to the correct office or staff member who can provide the fastest, most accurate response to the inquiry.
- (6) Ensure that NRC switchboard operators, in many cases the first contact the general public has with the agency, are knowledgeable about NRC offices, functions, and key personnel so that they may properly direct callers more quickly and more accurately.
- (7) Increase the number of NRC employees who take the in-house course **Clear Writing**, which teaches students how to write for a specific audience and purpose, provides guidance on how to respond in a logical manner, and teaches general correspondence style, editing, and grammar.

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## Electronic Media

### *Background*

Using information technology to improve responsiveness to the public is consistent with the findings of the National Performance Review's *Creating A Government That Works Better and Costs Less*, and *Reengineering Through Information Technology* (a report that accompanies the National Performance Review). In an October 28, 1993, letter transmitting his report entitled *Technology for Economic Growth: President's Progress Report*, President Clinton stated that technology is a powerful tool for making government more efficient and responsive. Thus, government intends to use technology to improve the quality and timeliness of service, to set up new ways for the public to communicate with government, and to make government information more readily available to the public. These goals are consistent with those set forth in NRC's *Information Technology Strategic Plan for*

*FY 1994-1995*, NUREG-1487, Vol. 1 (November 1993). The NRC Strategic Plan presents a vision to "manage shared data and documents as agency resources and ensure they are accessible, secure, and reliable," and to "update the agency's document management capabilities to meet current and anticipated programmatic needs," thus benefitting not only the NRC but the public as well.

The NRC has used a variety of methods to make electronic information available to the public. As an example, computer codes developed under the sponsorship of the NRC are made available through the Energy Science and Technology Software Center (ESTSC), which is operated under an interagency agreement with the Department of Energy. Accessions by the ESTSC are abstracted in *Computer Codes and Mathematical Models* (NUREG/BR-0083), which is published annually and is available to the public through the U.S. Government Printing Office.

Information available on the agency's electronic bulletin board systems is generally announced by *Federal Register* notice. Current and planned bulletin boards are, or will be, available through the Department of Commerce's National Technical Information Service (NTIS) by means of its clearinghouse known as FedWorld.

The NRC Office of Information Resources Management (IRM) serves in a support role by providing for the agency's information technology needs. IRM has initiated several activities that have the potential to help the agency be more responsive to the public. One such activity is the agency's toll-free telephone service which allows the public to make general inquiries of, or provide comments to, the staff. Also, the NRC has revised the *Citizen's Guide to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Information* to inform the public of existing methods for electronically accessing agency information by such methods as electronic bulletin boards, Internet, and World Wide Web, in addition to the more familiar telephone and fax. All NRC staff can now be reached via Internet electronic mail.

Also, IRM implemented an Internet World Wide Web server to give the public access to NRC information using MOSAIC software from the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA). Under a pilot program that began in August 1994, 200 NRC employees began to use this software to obtain information from other public and private



agencies and businesses. Using this same new technology, NRC created a "home page" for public access to NRC information via Internet. The availability of the NRC home page is cited by reference in the home page for the White House, the NCSA, and Conseil European pour la Recherche Nucleaire (developers of the World Wide Web), as well as in other domestic and international sources.

Because information technology is changing so rapidly, the agency is continually looking for ways to use new information processing tools to better support its needs and those of the public.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Continue to add electronic bulletin boards to FedWorld and to explore other methods for facilitating public involvement in the rulemaking process through electronic communications.
- (2) Develop methods of improving electronic information exchange between the nuclear industry and the NRC.
- (3) Develop automated systems to improve our ability to track and manage internal work flow, which will facilitate the agency's ability to respond to the public in a more timely manner.
- (4) Develop an electronic review, comment, and concurrence process to speed up the review and approval process of correspondence.
- (5) Use new technology and services for the deaf to allow individuals who are hearing impaired to communicate more readily with the NRC staff via the public telephone system. These improvements will also allow NRC employees who are hearing impaired to be contacted by more members of the public.

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## MISSION-RELATED CHANGES

### Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

#### Public Petitions

##### *Background*

Since its inception in 1975, the NRC has encouraged members of the public to bring potential health and safety issues involving NRC-licensed facilities to its attention. The primary mechanism available to the public for raising concerns involving public health and safety at licensed facilities and for seeking specific enforcement actions against licensees is the agency's "2.206 petition process." The agency rules for the process are described under section 2.206 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*. The 2.206 petition process is described in an NRC pamphlet entitled *Public Petition Process*, NUREG/BR-0200. NRC staff guidance for performing actions under the 2.206 process is given in the internal NRC Management Directive and Handbook 8.11, "Review Process for 10 CFR 2.206 Petitions." If the petition merely raises health and safety concerns and does not seek enforcement action, then the NRC staff reviews the petitioner's safety concerns outside the 2.206 petition process.

The 2.206 process provides that any person may file a petition requesting that the Commission institute a proceeding to modify, suspend, or revoke a license or to take any other enforcement action that may be appropriate. Once a petition is received, it is assigned to the appropriate office for evaluation and response. After the evaluation is completed, the office director issues a written decision that addresses the concerns raised by the petitioner and either grants, partially grants, or denies the petition. The office director's decision is provided to the Secretary of the Commission. The Commission can review the office director's decision at its discretion. After 25 days the office director's decision becomes final unless the Commission determines that the office director's decision should be modified or some other action be taken.

In the past the filing of a petition did not automatically result in a public hearing, and hearings have been rare. Historically, the NRC has

granted, in whole or in part, only about 10 percent of the petitions received, which has led to a perception that the NRC is not responsive to public petitions.

Consistent with current efforts to improve public responsiveness and enhance public participation in the decision-making process, the NRC reviewed the 2.206 process with the objective of making the process more effective, more easily understandable, and more credible. As part of its reassessment of the process, the NRC held a public workshop and obtained extensive feedback on the effectiveness of the program from citizens' groups, the nuclear industry, former petitioners, and State and local governments.

It was clear from this review that many believe that the 2.206 process at that time did not afford the petitioner an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the process. In addition, there were no provisions for keeping the petitioner informed of the status of his/her petition or for ensuring he/she received copies of all pertinent correspondence.

As a result of the findings of the review, the NRC has made improvements to the 2.206 process to increase public participation and to enhance communications with petitioners.

### *Recent Improvements*

Under this improved process, the NRC

- (1) Offers the petitioner, under certain circumstances, the opportunity for an informal non-adjudicatory public hearing as part of the petition review process.
- (2) Provides copies of all pertinent correspondence to all participants involved in the petition.
- (3) Identifies a single NRC contact for each petition.
- (4) Contacts the petitioner and informs him/her that the 2.206 process is a public process that does not protect the identity of the petitioner or the contents of the petition from the public, and ascertains from the petitioner whether he/she wishes to proceed with the petition or resubmit it as an allegation.

- (5) Established an electronic bulletin board to provide the public with monthly status updates on all pending petitions.
- (6) Notifies the petitioner of the status of the petition every 60 days or more frequently if a significant action occurs.
- (7) Established the goal of issuing the director's decision or partial director's decision within 120 days from the date of the acknowledgement letter. If the goal cannot be met, then NRC will write to the petitioner explaining the reason for the delay.

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## **Management of Allegations**

### ***Background***

Since 1987, the Commission has had in place a program to receive, process, and resolve allegations reported by workers involved in NRC-regulated activities. The NRC's allegations policies and procedures appear in NRC Management Directive 8.8, "Management of Allegations."

The NRC allegations program encourages employees involved in NRC regulated activities to report safety concerns to their management so that safety issues can be addressed promptly. If employees are not comfortable reporting their concerns to their management or if the employees believe their concerns have not been properly addressed, they provide their concerns directly to the NRC. To ensure that individuals providing concerns to the NRC are properly treated, the NRC protects the identity of individuals where anonymity is appropriate and possible and notifies individuals of the resolution of their concerns. The NRC also takes enforcement action (i.e., levies civil penalties) against licensees who retaliate against employees for reporting concerns to their management or to the NRC.

The NRC's process for handling allegations involves several offices. Within 30 days of receiving an allegation, the appropriate regional or program office convenes an Allegation Review Board (ARB) to address

the resolution of the allegation in a timely manner. This Board includes appropriate management, technical, legal, enforcement, and investigative staff from offices pertinent to the allegation. The ARB sets priorities for the staff to evaluate the concerns, conduct inspections and/or investigations of the concerns at licensee facilities, and interview knowledgeable individuals, as appropriate. When alleged report harassment and intimidation by their employers for raising concerns, the NRC informs alleged of remedies available through the Department of Labor to combat the alleged discriminatory practices. The NRC may take action independent of, or in parallel with, the Department of Labor to investigate these allegations.

On July 6, 1993, the NRC Executive Director for Operations set up a review team to reassess the NRC's program for protecting alleged from retaliation. The review team assessed whether the NRC had taken sufficient steps within its authority to create an atmosphere within the regulated community in which individuals who had safety concerns felt free to raise such concerns to their management or to the NRC without fear of retaliation. The review team's report, NUREG-1499, *Reassessment of the NRC's Program for Protecting Allegers Against Retaliation*, issued in January 1994, made 47 recommendations for improvements.

The recommendations included strengthening the NRC allegation program (19 recommendations), modifying the enforcement policy for more effective deterrents against violations (11 recommendations), issuing Commission policy statements to encourage licensees to maintain an environment in which employees can voice concerns without fear of retaliation (6 recommendations), prioritizing and supporting investigations to minimize the impact of retaliation (6 recommendations), and increasing NRC investigations and involvement in the Department of Labor process (5 recommendations). The NRC plans to issue a substantially revised Management Directive 8.8 to address the review team's recommendations during the first quarter of 1996.

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Assist workers involved in regulated activities.

- Make available to people working in NRC-regulated activities and the general public an NRC brochure that informs them of NRC's policies and procedures on handling allegations. The brochure will include guidance on reporting concerns to the NRC.
  - Inform alлегers by letter and brochure about their rights as employees and tell them how to obtain remedies for discriminatory acts through the Department of Labor.
  - Solicit feedback from alлегers on the NRC's handling of their allegations.
  - Establish a toll-free number for alлегers to report their concerns.
- (2) Protect alлегer identity.
- Inform alлегers by phone, letter, and brochure of the limitations on the NRC's ability to protect their identity so that alлегers do not assume that the NRC can protect their identities under all circumstances.
- (3) Monitor licensee environment.
- Be aware of whether the licensee's environment is hostile or conducive to employees raising safety concerns through trending of allegations received by the NRC and interaction with licensee management and employees during inspections.
  - Consider a licensee's environment during the NRC's assessment of a licensee's performance.
- (4) Respond to credible reports of retaliation.
- Respond to credible reports of reasonable fears of retaliation against individuals raising safety concerns to their management or the NRC **before** retaliation has occurred. (In this case, the alлегer must agree to be identified.)
  - Inform senior licensee management, by letter or meeting, of the fear of retaliation, notify licensees of the potential for NRC



enforcement action, and monitor licensee actions towards the allegor.

- (5) Provide feedback on NRC actions to allegors.
  - Implement specific criteria and time frames for NRC responses to allegors (e.g., acknowledging receipt of an allegation and its specifics within 30 days; advising allegors within 30 days of the completion of NRC action; and informing allegors every 6 months of the status of their concerns).
- (6) Track, trend, and monitor allegations from receipt to completion of agency action.
  - Implement various revisions to the NRC Allegation Management System data base, including introducing new fields for tracking and trending allegations and increasing data retrieval functions and data base capacity.
- (7) Enhance self-assessment, training, and staff interface activities.
  - Establish a Senior Level position of agency allegations advisor.
  - Conduct annual audits of the implementation of the allegation program in the regions and program offices.
  - Emphasize periodic training of appropriate staff.
  - Include performance standards for allegation follow-up in the appraisals of appropriate NRC staff and managers.
  - Conduct office allegation coordinator counterpart meetings.

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## **Emergency Preparedness**

### ***Background***

Emergency preparedness is an integral part of the NRC's defense-in-depth philosophy for ensuring a high level of safety at each of the

nuclear power plant sites in the U.S. In implementing this philosophy, the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) (1) reviews nuclear power plant licensee's emergency plans to determine if they conform to current regulations, (2) evaluates the licensee's ability to implement those plans through inspections and observation of periodic exercises, and (3) reviews the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) findings on the adequacy of the State and local offsite emergency preparedness programs.

Other activities in the area of emergency preparedness that involve public participation include (1) holding public meetings following emergency plan exercises evaluated by both FEMA and the NRC, (2) reviewing petitions submitted by members of the public for NRC to take action against a licensee under applicable NRC regulations, (3) responding to inquiries from the general public on specific emergency preparedness issues, (4) evaluating proposed changes to the NRC's rules governing emergency planning, and (5) responding to allegations from individuals or groups concerning emergency preparedness at a specific facility.

The population that resides within approximately 10 miles of a nuclear power plant site is provided with information on the radiological emergency plans that would impact them and the actions they are expected to take in the unlikely event of a severe accident at the plant. This information is provided annually to those residents by each nuclear power plant licensee. Emergency planning and preparedness entails a number of issues with which the public can readily identify (e.g., evacuation of homes, protection of children, and damage to property, etc.). Thus, the public has a genuine interest in emergency preparedness, both on an individual and a community level, and may want additional information. However, in many instances, this information has not been readily available, and the public is not aware of from where or whom that additional information may be obtained.

NRR's procedures for handling emergency preparedness issues do not explicitly exclude public participation. However, there are activities involving emergency planning where NRC and the public could benefit from increased participation by the public. Several improvements are being considered.



### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Encourage public input and participation when revisions to emergency planning rules that significantly impact offsite emergency planning are proposed. Do this through the use of publicity, meetings, and workshops.
- (2) Respond to inquiries from the general public regarding emergency planning by telephone. If a written response is needed and cannot be issued within a reasonable time, provide the requester a status report by telephone at specified intervals.
- (3) Conduct public meetings after emergency preparedness-related inspections, as appropriate, to discuss findings.
- (4) Modify, as necessary, the existing Memorandum of Understanding with FEMA to establish procedures for working more efficiently with FEMA on State and local emergency preparedness issues raised by the public (e.g. 2.206 petitions, allegations).

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### **Electronic Information Exchange**

#### ***Background***

In 1992, NRR held a workshop on the current licensing basis. After the workshop, NRR conducted audits of two licensees' electronic methods for locating the facilities' licensing basis. During these audits, the licensees informed NRR of the need for an agreed-upon electronic standard or format for electronic information exchange (EIE) between the NRC and the public.

In 1993, the licensees proposed that a joint effort be sponsored by the Nuclear Information and Records Management Association (NIRMA) and NRC, and acknowledged by the Nuclear Energy Institute, to investigate and recommend to the NRC a standard for EIE. Automating the exchange of information with the licensees and improving public access to regulatory documents will play a pivotal role in managing the large volume of documents generated within and received by the NRC.

An open workshop was held on December 7, 8, and 9, 1994, to present the findings from the NIRMA/NRC task force, to solicit public recommendations, and to inform the public of the status of information technology activities within the NRC. The NIRMA report is scheduled to be presented to the NRC in early 1996.

Electronic transmittals will reduce paperwork. However, while paper is still required, the NRC and licensees will benefit from receiving information that is ready for direct input to existing or planned data/text files. The NRC, its licensees, and the general public will be able to retrieve information more readily as these data/text files are established and opened to the public as read-only systems. NRR and the Office of Information Resources Management (IRM) have continued to support these EIE and related communication efforts by conducting a pilot program with licensees to actively demonstrate proposed solutions in the EIE and communication areas.

Preliminary EIE guidelines were adapted from previous work conducted by the Patent and Trademarks Office. These guidelines were updated with results and experiences of NRC pilot activities. Ten licensees, who participated in the pilot, identified and described systems under development that might aid in the electronic transport of documents. A small sample of documents were exchanged electronically between these licensees and NRC. A summary report of the pilot was received in October 1995 and provides input to the formulation of an EIE strategic plan for the NRC. The goal is to identify common factors between licensee systems and NRC document management requirements. These factors will be considered as the NRC implements systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its own information retrieval activities.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) An EIE strategy will be developed and presented to senior agency management. The strategy will include findings of the NRC Pilot and results of explorations into the issues of electronic signatures, legality of electronic submissions, and electronic records. Conversion of selected business transactions to electronic processes will be based on these considerations and the costs involved. (IRM)

- (2) Electronic transmission of informal information between NRC and its licensees will continue via Internet E-mail at the option of the parties involved. (NRR)
- (3) The Licensing Authority File, which contains the technical specifications for all nuclear power plants, will be considered for placement on an electronic bulletin board. Factors will include cost and legality of providing this information in electronic media. (NRR)

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## Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards

### Enrichment Facility Licensing and Certification

The role of the NRC in regard to uranium enrichment facilities is to license commercial facilities (such as the Louisiana Energy Services enrichment facility) and to certify the gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, Kentucky, and Portsmouth, Ohio (which are owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and leased and operated by the United States Enrichment Corporation, a government-owned corporation). These facilities enrich (increase) the concentration of uranium 235 so that the uranium can be used as fuel in nuclear power reactors.

### *Background on Licensing of Commercial Facilities*

In January 1991, Louisiana Energy Services submitted an application to construct and operate a gas centrifuge enrichment plant near Homer, Louisiana. Licensing under Part 70 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* provides for public participation in licensing activities. There are formal and informal interactions with the public and involve Federal, State, and local government agencies. In July 1991, the NRC held a public scoping meeting in Homer, Louisiana, to obtain input on the content of the environmental impact statement. The meeting was announced in the *Federal Register* and in local newspapers. A summary of the scoping meeting was made available to the participants. Many meetings between NRC staff and the applicant were held which were open to the public, and Citizens Against Nuclear Trash (CANT), a group opposed to the facility, was notified of the meetings. The staff had numerous interactions with State and Federal officials concerning the project. A local public document room was established to give the public access to documents related to the project.

When the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published, a *Federal Register* notice was issued providing for a 45-day public comment period. More than 500 individual letters were received in response to the notice, many requesting an extension of the public comment period. A 15-day extension was granted. All extension letters were acknowledged, and all requesters were sent a copy of the *Federal Register* notice announcing the extension. Before issuing the Final

Environmental Impact Statement in August 1994, the staff attended a meeting held by CANT and met with some local officials.

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel (ASLBP) conducted a formal hearing on this licensing action in two phases. The first phase took place in July 1994 primarily in Shreveport, Louisiana. It was open to the public and between 50 and 100 members of the public came, although they generally were not allowed to participate since participation in the hearing is limited to the intervenors, the applicant, and the staff. CANT is an intervenor in this proceeding. The State is allowed limited participation. However, during the first phase of the hearing, the ASLBP held a Saturday session in Homer, Louisiana, to hear limited appearance statements from the public. The second phase was held in March 1995 in Shreveport, Louisiana.

### ***Background on Gaseous Diffusion Plant Certification***

The Energy Policy Act of 1992 mandates that NRC "certify" the safe operation of the gaseous diffusion plants run by the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC). These plants have been operating for about 40 years and were officially leased to USEC on July 1, 1993.

The Energy Policy Act requires NRC to develop safety and safeguards standards for enrichment plants within 2 years. NRC is further required to establish a certification process under which the two gaseous diffusion plants will be certified annually by the NRC for compliance with the standards. Public interest in the initial certification is anticipated and NRC must report to Congress annually on the status of the plants.

NRC developed Part 76 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, which establishes technical, legal, and administrative requirements for the NRC's regulation of the plants. The rule was published in the *Federal Register* on September 23, 1994. It provides for a public meeting on the certification application to be held if the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, determines that a meeting is in the public interest. The rule also provides for a public comment period on the application. The staff is committed to holding a public meeting on the initial certification. The meeting will be announced in the *Federal Register* and advertised in local newspapers. The rule also gives the public an opportunity to petition the Commission for review of the



director's decision on the certification. To further assist the public, local public document rooms will be established in the area of each plant. The first certification application was received from USEC on April 24, 1995. The NRC rejected the application on May 5, 1995. A revised application was submitted by USEC on September 15, 1995.

The NRC has assigned resident inspectors to both sites. The resident inspectors and other regional officials meet at least annually with State and local officials. The initial meetings have been held for the Paducah, Kentucky, and the Portsmouth, Ohio, sites. Additional meetings will depend upon the interest expressed by the State and local officials.

Since the initial certification has not been completed, it is too early to know how public participation in the annual certifications might be improved.

### ***Planned Improvements***

Enrichment facility licensing and certification is similar to major fuel cycle facility licensing; the improvements planned here are expected to facilitate public participation in other major fuel cycle facility licensing actions.

### ***Licensing of Enrichment Facilities***

- (1) Hold public meetings to obtain comments and disseminate information, as appropriate.
- (2) Increase the time allowed for public comment on Draft Environmental Impact Statements to balance the interests of the applicant, the NRC, and the general public.

### ***Annual Certification of DOE Enrichment Plants***

- (1) Place copies of the application and the decision/certification documents in the local public document rooms as soon as they are received.
- (2) Note the availability of the documents in local media so that the public will be made aware of them immediately.

- (3) Evaluate the amount of public interest expressed to determine if public meetings after the initial certification are appropriate.

Contact: Merri Horn, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards,  
301-415-8126

## **Decommissioning of Sites and Facilities**

### ***Background***

Over the last 40 years, operations at licensed nuclear facilities have caused radiological contamination at a number of sites. This contamination must be reduced or stabilized in a timely and efficient manner to ensure protection of the public and the environment before the sites can be released and the license terminated. The NRC terminates about 300 licenses each year; most of these are routine and do not involve any significant contamination. The NRC's Site Decommissioning Management Plan (SDMP) lists about 50 sites that require special attention to resolve decommissioning policy and regulatory issues, as well as to prompt timely decommissioning at these sites.

The public has expressed interest in the decommissioning of a number of licensed sites. The amount of effort devoted by the NRC to public information and responsiveness activities varies from site to site, based on the amount of public concern and the complexity of the action required. For example, if a local community expresses concerns associated with licensing actions, the NRC considers holding, and has often held, a public meeting to explain NRC's role, the characteristics of the site, and the licensee's planned decommissioning approach and alternatives. At sites where concern has been expressed by the public and elected officials, the staff has invested a substantial effort in meeting periodically with officials and members of the public.

On the basis of its experience in overseeing decommissioning activities at a number of sites, the NRC has identified goals for improving public involvement in the ongoing licensing of decommissioning actions. These include establishing and building trust between citizens, agencies, and licensees; enhancing the openness of the process for public observation, information, and involvement; answering questions from the public in a timely manner; and encouraging licensee openness and responsiveness



to legitimate public concerns, including presentation of a decommissioning program at the outset. Effective communication with the public before initiating decommissioning or the NRC's approval of the decommissioning plan could save many hours later in answering questions or responding to allegations.

The NRC has also enhanced opportunities for public involvement in rulemaking activities related to decommissioning. After Commission approval of the rulemaking plan in November 1992, NRC conducted an enhanced participatory rulemaking on radiological criteria for decommissioning. The objective was to provide early and substantive opportunities for discussing issues with a wide variety of interested parties before developing a proposed rule. As part of this effort, NRC conducted seven rulemaking workshops around the country from January through May 1993 and eight scoping meetings in four cities in July 1993 to gather early public comments. In addition, in December 1994, NRC conducted a workshop on the potential use of site-specific advisory boards. This site-specific advisory board provision of the proposed rule on radiological criteria for decommissioning, which was published in *Federal Register* on August 20, 1994 (59 FR 43200), is intended to enhance meaningful and timely public participation in decommissioning.

### ***Planned Improvements***

Based on the enhanced participatory rulemaking, licensing experience, and two comprehensive reviews, NRC plans to make the following improvements to enhance opportunities for public involvement and information in the decommissioning program for nuclear materials facilities:

- (1) Notify the State Liaison Officer, the State agency responsible for radiological controls, and the county, city, or town where the site is located, or affected Tribal governments when a site is placed on the SDMP list or a decommissioning plan is submitted for a site not on the SDMP list. This will be in addition to the current practice of notifying State environmental protection agencies and the applicable U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional office.
- (2) Make all NRC meetings with contaminated site licensees and responsible parties open to the public for observation (consistent

with the policy statement on staff meetings open to the public which was published in the *Federal Register* on September 20, 1994 (59 FR 48340)). To the extent feasible, NRC will provide advance notice of these meetings to State, Tribal, and local officials and the public. NRC will conduct a significant proportion of such meetings in the vicinity of the site.

- (3) Develop and distribute a brochure on the NRC's regulatory process for decommissioning, including a description of radiological criteria that are currently being used to evaluate the adequacy of decommissioning actions. This pamphlet will be distributed to interested officials and members of the public.
- (4) Identify the NRC project manager as the principal NRC point of contact for each decommissioning site. This individual will work closely with other NRC staff to ensure a coordinated response to public concerns and inquiries.
- (5) Announce the availability of decommissioning plans and related documents in the *Federal Register* and local media, as appropriate, and offer an opportunity for a hearing on proposed license amendments. NRC will generally solicit written comments on the draft documents prior to taking licensing actions to approve site decommissioning plans, except in cases where the contamination is extremely limited or schedules imposed by outside parties (other than licensees) do not allow sufficient time for such review prior to approval.
- (6) Hold a public meeting on the scope of the environmental impact statement where NRC determines that an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared. The meeting will be held near the site as part of the scoping process, in accordance with the requirements in 10 CFR Part 51. NRC will solicit oral and written comments on what environmental impact and what decommissioning alternatives should be considered as part of the EIS. The NRC will advertise the meeting in the local media. The NRC will also distribute copies of the draft EIS to designated Federal, State, and local representatives and members of the public who attend the scoping meeting or otherwise express interest in the decommissioning action.

- (7) Provide additional opportunities for public information and involvement in the decommissioning process on a site-specific basis, considering the level of hazards involved and the public interest expressed.

Contact: Michael Weber, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, 301-415-7297

## Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

### Improving the Rulemaking Process

#### *Background*

The NRC is responsible for developing regulations (rulemakings) needed to execute its Atomic Energy Act responsibilities to regulate the domestic use of radioactive materials so as to protect the public health and safety. The rulemaking process is dictated by the Administrative Procedure Act which, in most cases, calls for opportunity for public review and comment in the development of Federal regulations. Hence, Commission rulemakings typically provide for a period of public comment before proposed rules are made final.

On occasion, the NRC has conducted workshops to elicit early substantive input from the public into the rulemaking process. In a recent rulemaking on radiological criteria for decommissioning, the Commission held a series of workshops across the country and established an electronic bulletin board to further enhance the degree of public participation in this particular rulemaking.

#### *Planned Improvements*

As a consequence of its success in facilitating early and substantive public involvement in the decommissioning rulemaking, the Commission will set up an electronic bulletin board for all future rulemakings and will routinely hold workshops for particularly complex or controversial rulemakings. Specifically, as a rulemaking improvement plan, the Commission will

- (1) Expand the use of workshops as a means to elicit early substantive public input on particularly complex or controversial rulemakings.
- (2) Use electronic bulletin boards to facilitate public review of and comment upon all future proposed rulemakings. Through the electronic bulletin board, the proposed rule, all supporting documents, background information, and summaries of any public workshops that are held will be available for online viewing and downloading by the public.

- (3) Explore more interactive concepts in the use of electronic media, such as REGNET, to further enhance public involvement in agency rulemakings.

Contact: Thomas O. Martin, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research,  
301-415-6238

## **Petitions for Rulemaking – 10 CFR 2.802**

### ***Background***

Section 2.802 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR 2.802) allows any interested person to petition the Commission to issue, amend, or rescind any regulation. Historically, this rule has been used mainly by some sectors of the public to submit petitions for rulemaking that purport to increase the margins of safety. A few petitions have also been submitted to maintain existing margins of safety at reduced cost. The NRC has found that on the average the time required to grant petitions for rulemaking exceeds 30 months. Currently, a summary report of petitions for rulemaking, including the status of each petition, is being prepared by the NRC on a semiannual basis and is available in the NRC's Public Document Room.

The NRC staff currently expends resources developing responses to petitions for rulemaking that may or may not result in changes to NRC regulations. The reasons for the denial of petitions sometimes only become evident after NRC staff has expended considerable effort to develop regulatory and backfit analyses.

The NRC is proposing to amend 10 CFR 2.802 pertaining to petitions for rulemaking to alleviate delays.

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Identify a single NRC contact for each petition.
- (2) Notify the petitioner of the status of the petition every 90 days.
- (3) Improve openness of the petition for rulemaking process by establishing criteria for prioritizing petitions.



- (4) Provide incentives for the petitioner to submit sufficient information in petitions through more expeditious resolution and disposition of petitions.
- (5) Identify clearly the supporting information that must be submitted with the petition to facilitate more expeditious disposition.
- (6) Provide guidance to the public for the preparation of petitions for rulemaking through regulatory guides.

Contact: T.Y. Chang, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research,  
301-415-6450

## Office of State Programs

### Reviews of Agreement States Programs

#### *Background*

Section 274 of the Atomic Energy Act, as amended, enacted by the Congress in 1959, recognized the States' interest in atomic energy activities. Under Section 274, the NRC is permitted to discontinue its authority and provide to the States, on a State-by-State basis, certain of its authority to regulate the use of byproduct material, source material, and small quantities of special nuclear materials. The States that have agreements with the NRC allowing them to regulate these activities are called Agreement States. At present, 29 Agreement States regulate approximately 15,000 radioactive materials licensees.

Section 274 requires the NRC to review Agreement State radiation control programs periodically. Currently, the NRC conducts a formal onsite review of an Agreement State's radiation control program to determine its continued adequacy and compatibility. The frequency and method of conducting the periodic, formal Agreement State program reviews will be determined according to the Integrated Materials Performance Evaluation Program (IMPEP).

#### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Issue draft IMPEP report within 30 days of program review completion.
- (2) Develop and use an internal procedure for preparing, reviewing, and issuing IMPEP reports.

Contact: Richard L. Bangart, Office of State Programs, 301-415-3340

### Technical Assistance to Agreement States

#### *Background*

Section 274i of the Atomic Energy Act (AEA), as amended, authorizes the Commission to give technical assistance to the States. The legislative



analysis of the bill that amended the AEA by adding Section 274 (Senate Report No. 870) made it clear that the intent of this authority was to "assist the States to prepare for, and carry out, independent State radiation protection programs." Thus, it is the policy of the NRC to provide technical assistance to Agreement States, as appropriate. Technical assistance is of three types: (1) routine technical assistance, which is provided to Agreement States as a normal part of NRC's day-to-day contact with Agreement States; (2) specific technical assistance, which requires specific assignment of NRC staff or consultants for a specified period of time and for a specified job; and (3) programmatic technical assistance, which is the assistance provided to an Agreement State that is experiencing problems of a programmatic nature. In giving technical assistance to Agreement States, the NRC concentrates its resources on those areas that an Agreement State may not be able to address through its own expertise or contractual support. A commitment from NRC to provide a State with technical assistance is made on a case-by-case basis and is dependent on the availability of NRC resources.

Agreement States request NRC's technical assistance through a variety of means. Usually, minor technical assistance is sought through telephone calls to either the Office of State Programs (OSP) staff or to other appropriate NRC office or regional staff. Agreement States send written requests for more substantial technical assistance involving multiple organizations, significant expenditure of staff time, or the use of consultants. The NRC can initiate technical assistance requests by offering such assistance to an Agreement State. The Director, OSP, coordinates the review of technical assistance requests with regional administrators and directors of affected program offices. The schedule for completing the assistance arrangement is mutually agreed to by all affected organizations, including the Agreement State. Throughout the process, the Agreement State offers feedback about the quality of the assistance.

### *Planned Improvements*

Contact the Agreement State to establish a completion date and identify the NRC staff member assigned to provide the assistance, once NRC has received a request for assistance and agreed to provide such assistance. Work to ensure that the originally negotiated completion date is met

80 percent of the time. Negotiate a new completion date with the Agreement State if task complexity, resource limitations, or competing priorities preclude completion by the originally scheduled date. Provide technical assistance to the Agreement States in accordance with the original or extended completion date 95 percent of the time.

Contact: Richard L. Bangart, Office of State Programs, 301-415-3340

## **Regulatory Review of Agreement State Proposed Regulations**

### ***Background***

In addition to performing the formal reviews for adequacy and compatibility, NRC asks Agreement States to give NRC an opportunity to comment on their draft proposed regulations. Usually, NRC reviews proposed regulations at the time the State is accepting comments from the public. While the regulation is in draft form, OSP and other appropriate NRC offices (generally the Offices of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, Nuclear Regulatory Research, and the General Counsel) submit technical and legal comments. Also, in conjunction with NRC reviews of Agreement States regulatory programs, NRC staff reviews the status of State activities to adopt new regulations to determine if they are compatible with NRC regulations.

The time required for completion of review of draft State regulations is determined largely by the Agreement State's own administrative rulemaking process. OSP tries to meet the State's schedule and normally discusses the draft comments with the State staff by telephone to resolve concerns and ensure understanding of the regulations and the comments. Then OSP provides written comments to the State.

On occasion, OSP may have to defer the review of an Agreement State's draft regulation because OSP is committed to perform higher priority work or special projects.

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Provide verbal notification to the State on a draft regulation received and assigned for review, or when NRC has to defer a review. Incorporate the verbal notification date into a comment letter 100 percent of the time.

- (2) Streamline the review of draft regulations and the process of providing comments so that comments will normally be provided to the State within 60 days after the draft regulation is received. The Agreement States will be requested to submit copies of draft regulations at least 60 days before the end of the public comment period for the rulemaking.
- (3) Place copies of the draft regulations and the written comments resulting from the review in the PDR.

Contact: Richard L. Bangart, Office of State Programs, 301-415-3340

## **Agreement States Training**

### ***Background***

Section 274i of the Atomic Energy Act (AEA), as amended, authorizes the Commission to provide training to the States. The legislative analysis of the bill that amended the AEA by adding section 274 made it clear that the intent of this authority was to "assist the States to prepare for, and carry out, independent State radiation protection programs." Therefore, NRC offers training courses to Agreement State personnel and, in some instances, to non-Agreement State personnel, to increase their technical and regulatory knowledge in those areas necessary for competent work in a State radiation control program.

To ensure consistent, high-quality training, the Agreement States technical training program has been consolidated within the NRC's Technical Training Division in the Office for Analysis and Evaluation of Operational Data. This consolidation will also help provide greater uniformity in materials training programs for NRC and Agreement States staff. NRC has coordinated the content, nature, and attendance at these courses with Agreement States personnel. Training activities are developed and scheduled through a 1- to 2-year period.

A schedule of planned courses is sent to the Agreement States annually. The current goal is to send specific course notices and schedules to the State personnel 60 days before a course starts. Those wishing to attend are asked to apply as soon as possible. The quality of the course is monitored by a subjective evaluation of questionnaires and evaluation forms completed by course participants.

*Planned Improvement*

Conduct monthly training planning meetings to ensure that in all cases training availability notices to Agreement States are received no later than 60 days before a course begins, and that confirmation notices of acceptance into a training course are sent to Agreement States no later than 30 days before the course begins.

Contact: Richard L. Bangart, Office of State Programs, 301-415-3340

## Regions

### Materials Licensing and Inspection

#### *Background*

Nearly all of the materials licensing and inspection activities are conducted from the four NRC regional offices. The regions process over 4,000 requests for new licenses, amendments to existing licenses, and requests for license renewals each year. As part of this activity, the regions frequently answer licensees' technical questions and help to provide clear interpretations of NRC's regulatory requirements.

The regions also conduct approximately 2,000 routine and reactive inspections of over 6,000 materials licenses each year. These licensing and inspection activities bring NRC's regional staff in close contact with a large number of licensees on a daily basis.

In addition, the regions host workshops on regulatory issues, conduct prelicensing meetings and site visits, and respond to concerns from the public and licensees on a variety of radiological matters.

NRC has developed internal performance standards against which it can measure its timeliness and responsiveness in the materials area. In 1988, the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards established a timeliness measure for processing licensing actions (i.e., 80 percent of the new applications and amendments within 90 days, 80 percent of the renewals within 180 days). At that time, several hundred pending actions exceeded the timeliness standard. The situation was exacerbated in the early 1990s when the decommissioning rule and the 100-percent fee recovery rule prompted many more licensees to request amendments than the NRC had projected based on historical rates.

Today, that backlog has been reduced to levels lower than at any time since these data were first collected in 1988, but some cases still exceed the standard. Partially in response to this, NRC has initiated a major effort known as "Business Process Redesign" (BPR) to modernize the materials licensing program and to make NRC far more responsive to licensees and the public. Early phases of the effort have focused on licensing improvements, but NRC intends to expand BPR to the inspection area in the future.



*Planned Improvements*

- (1) Use BPR to develop a fundamentally new approach to process licensing amendments. BPR is designed to perform at least an order of magnitude faster than the current system. It will be supported by clear, consistent, and timely regulatory guidance and will ensure that there is no adverse effect on public health and safety from its implementation.
  
- (2) Use BPR's modern information technology to streamline operations based on three major concepts: (a) the establishment of a Regulatory Product Design Center where technical members of the licensing and inspection community can interact to design and prepare regulatory products necessary to support, maintain, and enhance the new licensing process; (b) improved processing of licensing through reviewer-performed and computer-assisted licensing, using a graded approach commensurate with the safety hazards the application poses; and (c) a new way of working in agency-wide teams.

Contact: Patricia A. Rathbun, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, 301-415-7178

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

### Office of the Controller

#### License Fee Inquiries

##### *Background*

The NRC is required by legislation to recover 100 percent of its budget each fiscal year through the assessment of fees. This requires issuing more than 10,000 bills to licensees. There have been significant controversies regarding NRC fees, especially those for NRC inspections and annual fees. As a result, the NRC staff receives hundreds of letters and telephone calls after each monthly or quarterly billing cycle. These interactions with the public involve general questions about the purpose of the bills, challenges on the appropriateness of the fees, exemption requests, and questions about license authorizations and fees. Because of the large volume of mail and telephone calls after each billing cycle, the NRC has not always been able to respond to inquiries as quickly as it would like. The goal is to answer most correspondence within 45 days after receipt and to respond to 80 percent of routine telephone calls within 1 day. A sample of correspondence reveals that we have significantly improved our response time in the past 8 months.

Month/Year	Percent of Correspondence Answered Within		
	30 days	45 days	60 days
March 94 (non-peak month)	39	72	82
October 94 (peak month)	72	85	92

##### *Planned Improvements*

Responding to fee inquiries in a more timely manner is being approached from two perspectives. First, we would like to reduce the need for incoming inquiries. To this end, we plan to

- (1) Improve the timeliness of bills so that licensing and inspection bills are issued within 30 days after the end of the billing cycle in order to reduce incoming questions about the purpose of the bills.
- (2) Improve the format of the invoices to make them more understandable so as to eliminate some of the questions that we have received in the past.
- (3) Develop a simple pamphlet, containing typical questions and answers, that could be included with bills.

The second set of improvements is intended to address the public interaction workload, which exceeds the currently available staff during the peak periods that follow issuance of bills. We plan to

- (1) Provide interim responses acknowledging receipt of licensees' letters that involve more complex questions.
- (2) Use contractors in performing research and in drafting correspondence during peak periods.
- (3) Use more standard letters to respond to frequently asked questions.

Contact: Diane B. Dandois, Office of the Controller, 301-415-7544

## **Commercial Payment Inquiries**

### ***Background***

Before fiscal year (FY) 93, the commercial payment process was, for the most part, performed manually. In addition to delaying payment, this caused delays in responding to vendor inquiries. Other factors, such as staff delays in notification of receipt of goods and services and invoice approvals, further contributed to delays in timely payments.

The NRC has improved the timeliness of payments to commercial vendors and contractors as shown:

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Percent of Payments Made On Time</b>	<b>Percent of Payments Made w/o Penalties Due</b>	<b>Dollar Amount</b>
1993	52	92	\$18,699
1994	82	94	14,699

At the beginning of FY 93, the NRC implemented a new financial accounting system that includes an automated accounts payable subsystem. The accounts payable subsystem schedules payments to comply with the Prompt Payment Act requirements and automated measurement of payment performance to allow close monitoring by management. The subsystem also contains an online inquiry capability to allow for more timely and more informative responses to vendor inquiries. Additionally, improvements were made in the procedures and logistics to ensure timely notification of receipt of goods and services and invoice approvals.

Other efforts have been made to improve agency responsiveness in the commercial payments area. These include the addition of a customer assistance desk in the commercial payments area and the addition of contractor staff to help process payments. The customer assistance desk allows the commercial payments staff to respond very quickly to vendor inquiries and resolve related problems. A central telephone number was established for this purpose and is included on all check payments and outgoing correspondence.

### ***Planned Improvement***

Increase the percentage of on-time payments in FY 95 to 84 percent.

Contact: Anthony C. Rossi, Office of the Controller, 301-415-7341

## Office of Administration

### Contracting Process

#### *Background*

NRC complies with the competitive contracting procedures prescribed by the Federal Acquisition Regulation and agency implementing regulations known as the NRC Acquisition Regulation. This contracting process requires substantial contact with the public.

Individuals and firms interested in doing business with the NRC interact with agency staff in a variety of ways. For example, the staff in the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights and the contracting staff frequently receive inquiries from small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses regarding NRC contracting opportunities. This usually leads to the individual or firm being placed on the NRC bidders mailing list. Once a contract need is identified, NRC begins the process by publicizing a brief synopsis of the requirement in the *Commerce Business Daily (CBD)*. This gives interested firms an opportunity to obtain a copy of NRC's Request for Proposals (RFP) and to compete for NRC work. Potential sources are also identified through the NRC bidders mailing list. Once an individual or organization elects to submit a proposal to NRC, interaction with NRC may involve a preproposal conference, questions relating to proposal preparation and submission, and negotiations. Firms that are unsuccessful in this process may request a formal debriefing. Those that are successful in receiving an award will continue to interact with the NRC through participation in a contract startup meeting, regularly scheduled progress review meetings, negotiations associated with required contract changes, and the invoice payment and closeout processes.

For the most part, the public perceives the contracting process as too long and tedious. Although it is designed to ensure equity and fairness in contractor selections, the process often serves as a source of frustration for the general public, not only because there is only one winning proposal but because it frequently takes 6 months to a year or more for the process to reach that point. Although the NRC is aware of this perception and makes every effort to be responsive to the needs of competing firms at each stage of the process, there are few timeliness



standards currently in place to clarify expectations and measure NRC performance in this area.

NRC has embarked on a number of initiatives to make the procurement process more efficient and effective, beginning with being designated as a Procurement Reinvention Laboratory under the National Performance Review. Initiatives under the reinvention lab include simplifying the RFP process, implementing the NRC BankCard program, empowering contracting personnel through increased delegations of authority, and performing a business process reengineering study of the procurement process. These initiatives should help NRC make the contracting process less cumbersome and more in line with the way the public acquires goods and services.

Other initiatives are under way to improve the timeliness and quality of NRC staff interactions with the public on contractual matters in general. These improvements and associated timeliness standards (in working days) are described below.

### *Planned Improvements*

In responding to the public under this improved process, the contracting staff will

- (1) Acknowledge requests from individuals and firms wishing to be added to the NRC bidders mailing list and mail requested application packages to requestors within 2 days.
- (2) Establish a central point for receipt and tracking of all correspondence received by the contracting office so that actions can be assigned and monitored effectively to ensure responses are timely and adequately address the needs of the requestor.
- (3) Ensure notices placed in the *CBD* clearly describe the NRC contracting opportunity, the RFP issue date, and a point of contact for obtaining a copy of the RFP.
- (4) Issue the RFP within 1 day of issue date stated in *CBD* notice unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.
- (5) Provide written response to questions from potential offerors regarding the RFP within 10 days of receipt. (If an interim response

is necessary, the response will give the date on which a final response will be provided.)

- (6) Notify competing firms whether they are in/out of the competitive range within 5 days of determination by the contracting officer.
- (7) Notify winning/losing firms of award decision within 3 days of award.
- (8) Provide debriefing after award within 10 days of receipt of request.
- (9) Hold kick-off meeting with winning contractor within 5 days of award.
- (10) Streamline and automate invoice processing procedures to ensure that contractors receive timely payments.
- (11) Request a final audit of contract costs within 75 days of the date that the contract is assigned for closeout.

Contact: Timothy F. Hagan, Office of Administration, 301-415-7305

## **NRC Headquarters Security Force**

### ***Background***

The NRC protects the agency's personnel, information systems, and property at the Headquarters' White Flint North complex by engaging the services of a private security firm. Security officers are stationed at various entry points throughout the complex. They conduct roving patrols of the agency's facilities and perform other security-related activities.

The security force has daily contact with employees, contractors, visitors, and the general public through checking people who enter and exit the White Flint North complex and through responding to requests for assistance or information. Local area network (LAN) capabilities installed for the security officers at fixed locations throughout the White Flint complex enhance responsiveness and interaction between the security force and visitors.

During an average month, more than 4,000 individuals visit the NRC for meetings and interaction with NRC staff. This activity, coupled with the comings and goings of facility-related contractors, delivery personnel, messengers, and others, comprises an extremely active, publicly oriented environment. Every attempt is made to balance protection with service. Public responsiveness has been measured by feedback. All feedback (both positive and negative) is discussed with the security force project manager, and corrective action is taken as appropriate. Records maintained on security-related events and tracking of various incidents involving employees, contractors, and the public help form the basis for adjustments to security procedures.

In order to improve the agency's ability to make significant and immediate changes to security officer coverage, NRC actively sought and obtained the delegation of contractual authority for the guard contract from the General Services Administration. This redelegation allows NRC to exercise direct oversight and control over the security force.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Make improvements to the security program as determined from a survey conducted of security officers, visitors, security advisors, and selected staff. This survey was conducted to determine a baseline of how well the security officers were perceived to be interacting with the public and the staff. While the findings were generally favorable, they pointed to some areas where improvements could be made. A follow-up survey of staff and visitors will be conducted in the spring of 1996 to determine if improvements have been perceived.
- (2) Develop a LAN-based visitor identification system. When the system has been tested and installed, it will allow Headquarters staff to notify Security of impending visits, thereby expediting the processing of visitors upon their arrival.
- (3) Enhance the public relations and interpersonal skills of security officers through video training and personal briefings.

Contact: Richard A. Dopp, Office of Administration, 301-415-7402

## Quality and Timeliness of Correspondence

### *Background*

The NRC considers the quality and timeliness of agency correspondence as key components of its public responsiveness initiative. Agency correspondence responds to issues raised by individual citizens, public interest groups, Members of Congress, trade and professional associations, the media, and a variety of other sources. The quality of NRC correspondence directly reflects NRC's responsiveness to the concerns of the requester and the staff's recognition that different audiences require different approaches. The way we respond affects whether the public sees us as courteous, accessible, and understanding of its needs.

The staff reviewed 6 months of correspondence prepared for review and approval of the Chairman and Commissioners to assess the timeliness of responses to correspondence. The results show that while the average time to respond was about 15 working days, 25 percent of the letters reviewed required 20 or more working days for a reply. As part of this review, the Secretariats of five other Federal agencies were contacted to ascertain their procedures and experience in controlling, tracking, and responding to correspondence. The results of the informal telephone survey indicate that NRC is doing significantly better than a number of other agencies and is on par with the best. Nevertheless, the NRC is looking at ways to improve the quality and timeliness of its responses to the public.

To this end, quality and timeliness improvement plans have been developed.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Answer all correspondence within 15 working days or if a complete response cannot be developed within that time, prepare an interim reply. This allows approximately 10 working days for the staff to develop the response and 1 week for management/Commission review, approval, and dispatch.
- (2) Include in the response the name and telephone number of the responsible NRC person who can be contacted for additional



information or, in the case of an interim response, for information regarding the status of the reply.

- (3) Update internal procedures to ensure proper tracking and timeliness.
- (4) Develop a *Quality of Correspondence Workshop* for NRC employees stressing how to write for a specific audience and purpose, how to respond in a logical manner, and how to conform to general correspondence style rules and the rules of editing and grammar.
- (5) Publish a *Quick Desktop Guide to Quality Correspondence* for use by the staff.
- (6) Publish a column, on a continuing basis, in internal agency publications to highlight the importance of clear, well-written responses to the public.

Contact: Quality: Walter E. Oliu, Office of Administration,  
301-415-7166

Timeliness: Andy Bates, Office of the Secretary, 301-415-1963

## **Freedom of Information Act Program**

### ***Background***

The NRC Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program operates under the requirements established by statutory law, 5 U.S.C. 552 and Department of Justice policy guidance. The agency is required to provide the public access to non-exempt NRC records within 10 to 20 work days of the time records are requested.

The FOIA staff interacts with the public by providing access to records maintained by the NRC. All FOIA requests received by the agency are controlled and coordinated by the FOIA staff. Requests are sent to each NRC office that appears to have responsibility for any of the records that would be included in responding to the request.

The FOIA staff interacts directly with public interest groups, licensees, law offices, bidding contractors, etc., whenever it is necessary to clarify issues concerning a request.



Once all issues have been resolved regarding proposed disclosure or nondisclosure, the FOIA staff advises the requester of the releasability of the requested documents. Releasable documents are sent to the requester or are placed in the Public Document Room where the requester may review them or request copies from the PDR copying contractor.

NRC plans to implement the following initiatives to further enhance the agency's responsibility to provide public access to NRC records:

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Reduce the average time to respond to FOIA requests by 20 percent.
- (2) Survey FOIA users to determine the level of satisfaction with the current NRC FOIA program.
- (3) Hold an FOIA users conference to identify areas for improvement in the current program.
- (4) Conduct regular FOIA training to increase staff cognizance of FOIA policy and to improve the quality and timeliness of initial disclosure decisions.

Contact: Russell A. Powell, Office of Administration, 301-415-7169

## **Local Public Document Room Program**

### ***Background***

The NRC places a high priority on providing public access to its information. Through the local public document room (LPDR) program, started by the Atomic Energy Commission in the late 1960s and continued and expanded by the NRC since its inception in 1975, citizens living or working near nuclear power reactors and certain other nuclear facilities have access to the records used by the NRC in licensing and regulating the local facility.

LPDR collections are maintained in academic, public, and State libraries having evening and weekend hours. NRC's LPDR program

staff has daily contact with the public and with local librarians and assists them in locating records in the collections. More than seven telephone calls are received and responded to each day on the toll-free LPDR hotline. Because the NRC converted the site-specific paper collections at power reactor and high-level waste LPDRs to NUDOCS microfiche several years ago, the public now has local access to more than 1.5 million records released by the NRC since 1981. Among these are the records on all NRC licensed facilities as well as NRC staff and contractor publications, rulemaking documents, and generic issues. Online access to the NUDOCS data base of publicly available records is currently provided to 41 power reactor and the 2 high-level waste LPDRs. Toll-free searches can be conducted approximately 13 hours each business day, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. eastern time. Records identified in searches can be viewed and copied from the NUDOCS microfiche at each LPDR. Paper records are still sent to LPDRs that have small collections, such as LPDRs for contaminated sites.

The staff visits LPDRs at least once every 4 years and more frequently, as needed, in response to library staff changes, increased public interest in the collection, or the need to provide NUDOCS computer training to librarians and the public. The LPDR staff contacts interested members of the public in the site area to inform them of upcoming visits and to invite them to the training sessions. The visits are often publicized by the librarians in their newsletters and in local papers, on bulletin boards, and in radio announcements.

A variety of reference tools is placed at each LPDR to help patrons locate records in the collections. These include user's guides and weekly and cumulative accession list printouts identifying the records on the local facility that are available at the library. In addition, weekly and monthly printouts are sent to LPDR patrons interested in certain reactors or issues. Upon request, customized printouts are provided to LPDR patrons and interested members of the public.

The LPDR program staff also reviews NRC press releases and the *Federal Register* on a daily basis and informs LPDR librarians and members of the public who have expressed an interest in certain power reactors or issues when items they have been looking for are published.

All *Federal Register* notices that refer to power reactors or other facilities for which an LPDR exists identify the name and address of the

LPDR library so the public can go there to find information on the matter discussed in the notice.

The NRC will continue to utilize the LPDR program to respond to the information needs of local citizens living or working near the facilities it regulates. Several improvements are being planned to make the LPDR program more responsive to the public.

To help improve responsiveness, LPDRs were recently established for the two gaseous diffusion plants in Paducah, Kentucky, and Portsmouth, Ohio. As the materials become available, these LPDRs will be provided with collection records, accession lists, instructional materials, reference tools, and any necessary microfiche equipment. Onsite training will be provided as needed. In addition, the staff started providing LPDRs with facsimile copies of preliminary notifications of occurrences (PNOs) as they are issued. The LPDR program staff receives PNOs directly from all regions and immediately transmits them to the LPDR for the subject facility. Also, the LPDR program staff has placed postage-paid postcards addressed to the staff at all LPDR libraries. By using the postcards, LPDR librarians and patrons will have another way to conveniently communicate their comments, problems, and inquiries about the LPDR program to the NRC. To monitor agency responsiveness to the local information needs of the public and to plan appropriate improvements in the LPDR program, the NRC will review feedback from the postcards, the toll-free LPDR hotline, and reports submitted by LPDR librarians.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Visit at least 22 LPDRs in FY 95 to ensure that the collections are complete and up to date and that librarians are trained in how to locate records for patrons. Computer training will be provided at those LPDRs that have online access to the NUDOCS data base. The public will be invited to attend the training sessions through publicity provided by the librarians as well as through announcements posted in the libraries.

- (2) Connect more LPDRs to the NUDOCS data base. The LPDR program staff will work with candidate LPDRs to connect them to the NUDOCS data base and provide appropriate training throughout the coming year.

Contact: Jona Souder, Office of Administration, 301-415-7169

## Public Meeting Notice System

### *Background*

The NRC's long-standing open meeting policy was recently revised to further the goal of providing meaningful opportunities for the public to be informed of NRC activities without unduly affecting open and candid discussions between licensees and the NRC staff or interfering with the NRC staff's ability to exercise its regulatory and safety responsibilities without undue administrative burden. The Final Policy Statement on Staff Meetings Open to the Public, dated September 14, 1994, was published in the *Federal Register* on September 20, 1994 (59 FR 48340). On November 1, 1994, centralized agency services became available to the public for obtaining schedules for the staff meetings that are open to the public. The meeting policy is a matter of NRC discretion and may be departed from as NRC convenience and necessity may dictate.

The NRC's LPDR program staff is receiving information on each meeting open to the public under the revised guidance provided in the Final Policy Statement and in Management Directive and Handbook 3.5, "Public Attendance at Certain Meetings Involving the NRC Staff." Meeting information is entered into a data base that generates reports of public meetings for posting in the agency's PDR. A toll-free telephone recording announces upcoming public meetings and a toll-free electronic bulletin board system (BBS) contains searchable information on each meeting. The telephone recording accommodates multiple concurrent users. The BBS and the telephone recording are operational 24 hours a day. The BBS, the telephone recording, and the reports posted in the PDR contain the name and phone number of the NRC meeting contact should a member of the public need additional information on the upcoming meeting.



Several feedback mechanisms are already in place to monitor the effectiveness and usefulness of the public meeting notice system to the public. People using the toll-free BBS and the toll-free telephone recording can leave messages should they need assistance accessing the public meeting database or care to leave comments. Messages are responded to by the system operator, the system manager, or the LPDR program staff, as appropriate, within 24 hours. Should users want more information, the name and telephone number of the NRC bulletin board system manager and system operator are also available online. In addition, the toll-free BBS and telephone recording, as well as the reports of upcoming meetings available in the PDR and LPDRs, include the name and phone number of the NRC contact for each meeting, should the public require further information.

### *Planned Improvement*

Encourage LPDRs with computer capabilities to provide public access to the toll-free BBS. The phone number for both the toll-free BBS and the telephone recording is posted in LPDR libraries. LPDR librarians and their patrons can report any problems they encounter in the public meeting notice system by calling the toll-free LPDR hotline.

Contact: Jona Souder, Office of Administration, 301-415-7169



## Office of Personnel

### Employment Applications

#### *Background*

It is the policy of the NRC to reply promptly and courteously to all employment applications. The Office of Personnel (OP) serves as the central point of contact for all employment inquiries from within and outside the agency. OP has one system that tracks the timeliness and quality of responses to technical applicants from outside the agency who are interested in being considered for general NRC employment. This system, known as the Applicant Review System (ARS), maintains a pool of applicants for current and future technical position vacancies, provides a variety of reports that allows for assessments of the NRC recruitment program, produces a variety of user-designed and -manipulated reports, and generates responses to applicants applying for general technical employment.

This system works well. However, there are certain other categories of applications that are not handled using a formalized system to acknowledge receipt and disposition of applications. These categories include

- (1) applications in response to specific vacancy announcements,
- (2) applications for special student programs,
- (3) secretarial applications,
- (4) unsolicited administrative applications, and
- (5) applications for Senior Executive Service and Senior Level positions.

OP staff cannot readily access the status of applications in these categories nor can OP measure the level of responsiveness without a relatively time-consuming staff exercise.

The goal of providing all applicants prompt acknowledgement of the receipt and disposition of their employment applications is generally

being met. However, there is currently no vehicle to immediately gauge the level of success without a relatively time-consuming process for staff members.

Consistent with current efforts to improve public responsiveness, OP has reviewed the processes associated with all categories of applications. OP's goal is to construct a centralized, automated system that covers all categories of applications. The expanded system will further enhance the quality of the responses to applicants and measure the timeliness of the responses. The system will also provide a greater degree of accountability to the public and increase staff awareness of the importance of responsiveness to the public.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Send an acknowledgement letter to all applicants within 7-10 working days of receipt of application.
- (2) Send a letter informing all applicants of the final outcome of their applications within 10 working days of final disposition.
- (3) Answer questions from applicants quickly throughout the process.
- (4) Provide consistency in the process for responding to all applicants among the four regions and headquarters.

Contact: Jan Clemens, Office of Personnel, 301-415-7530

## Office of the Secretary

### NRC Headquarters Public Document Room

#### *Background*

The Headquarters Public Document Room, located at 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC, is the central repository of NRC's publicly released document collection. Beginning with a small set of AEC's civilian reactor docket files, the PDR collection has grown to 2.0 million documents and continues to expand at a rate in excess of 300 new items each day. Added together, the paper collection, microfiche, and reference materials, on site and in offsite, on-call storage, total 10,000 linear feet. Documents arrive primarily as paper, microfiche, audio-visuals, and fully searchable electronic text on diskettes or are downloaded.

The PDR is staffed with professional reference librarians, all of whom have received technical training in reactor systems at the Chattanooga technical training facility. They interact directly with the members of the public who visit, phone, fax, send letters, or E-Mail over Internet. In 1994, over 13,000 requests for PDR services were placed, with recorded usage of 46,000 files. In 1994, more than 3.8 million paper copies, over 16,000 microfiche, and nearly 400 diskettes were reproduced for members of the public.

The public's primary search/retrieval system is the PDR's computerized, online Bibliographic Retrieval System (BRS). At the end of calendar year (CY) 1994 there were 423 onsite and remote password holders for this system. With the availability of professional reference staff to aid in computer searches, the PDR is able to ensure equal access for those who do not have their own terminals. The BRS was designed specifically for conducting rapid, accurate searches of the data base for the types of queries generated by the PDR's varied user population (individual members of the public, congressional staff, media representatives, staffs of other agencies, foreign embassies, law firms, States, consulting firms, public interest groups, and the like). Many users take advantage of the PDR's automatic document ordering and delivery program, which dispatches copies of 39 distinct types of documents and reports as they arrive in the PDR. The PDR Bulletin Board was established on

FedWorld in February 1995 and includes announcements of Commission and Advisory Committee meetings. In addition, toll-free telephone connections to the BRS and the PDR reference service have been established and a directory of frequently sought information resources in other agencies has been compiled for public use.

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Upgrade search and retrieval functions, such as a "Selective Dissemination of Information" feature to improve the user's awareness of new documents of interest, the addition of more types of documents in electronic format, and revision of the users' manual. These are on the BRS schedule for 1995.
- (2) Develop comprehensive bibliographic compilations of generic letters and administrative letters.
- (3) Expand media to include documents on CD-ROM.
- (4) Continue to work with the NRC staff to seek ways to shorten the time required for newly released documents to reach the PDR.

Contact: Elizabeth J. Yeates, Office of the Secretary, 202-634-3380

### **White Flint Activities**

#### ***Background***

In its White Flint operations, the Office of the Secretary (SECY) interacts daily with members of the public in four primary areas

- receiving public comments on agency rulemakings,
- informing the public and responding to questions about Commission meeting schedules,
- responding to questions about Commission decision-making papers (SECY papers), and
- handling incoming and outgoing public correspondence.

Through the years, SECY has developed and enhanced the mechanisms for service in these areas by initiating



- a postcard response system to acknowledge receipt of each rulemaking comment,
- a telephone recording and the scrolling of Commission meeting information on the lobby TV,
- an advance copy procedure for expediting the public release of SECY papers, staff requirements memoranda, and Commission votes, and
- improved procedures for expediting approval of executive correspondence and placement in the Public Document Room.

### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Develop a SECY *Home Page* for inclusion in the NRC *Home Page* on the World Wide Web via Internet. This page will feature information on open Commission meetings, NRC history, the Public Document Room, and the submission of filings and comments on NRC rulemakings.
- (2) Produce electronic acknowledgment cards to speed up mailings to rulemaking commenters.
- (3) Distribute electronically the Commission's meeting schedule to interested individuals via Internet.
- (4) Explore electronic submittal of correspondence and *Federal Register* notices on Commission rulemakings to speed up document processing for placement in the PDR.

Contact: Sandy Joosten, Office of the Secretary, 301-415-1962



## Office of Public Affairs

### Informing the Public

#### *Background*

One of the primary objectives of NRC's Public Affairs Program is to make available to the public full and complete information on NRC activities to assist the public in making informed judgments regarding NRC activities. The primary means of keeping the public informed about the regulatory activities and programs of the NRC is through the news media.

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) informs the media by

- issuing news releases, speeches and fact sheets,
- distributing reports, decisions, and other documents reflecting NRC actions,
- arranging for NRC officials to give press conferences and talk with editorial boards of major newspapers around the country,
- having NRC officials respond to media questions after Commission meetings, staff meetings with licensees, plant visits, special inspections, and other significant meetings, and
- talking to the media in person or by telephone.

Approximately 500 press releases are issued annually to the news media and an estimated 12,000 news media inquiries are handled annually by OPA staff in Headquarters and the regions. All press releases are placed in NRC's document retrieval system, NUDOCS, to which many news organizations have access.

Information is provided directly to the public in a number of ways. All press releases are available in NRC's Public Document Room in Washington, DC, and in Local Public Document Rooms near nuclear facilities. The staff responds to daily inquiries from the public over the telephone and in writing. Typically responses to written inquiries (about 600 each year) are made within 2 days and often include pamphlets about the NRC, nuclear waste, licensing of nuclear power plants, NRC's research program, and the public petition process.

A video about the NRC is available upon request to audiences including schools, community organizations, consumer groups, and any others, including public television stations, interested in learning about regulation of nuclear activities. Speakers are provided on request to talk to interested groups, including area schools. For these talks, NRC employees often use a standard slide presentation or the NRC video.

### ***Planned Improvements***

- (1) Make available press releases for the past 30 days at FedWorld through the Internet.
- (2) Provide full text of press releases on an electronic bulletin board available to the public. Explore transmittal of press releases to news organizations through Internet.
- (3) Announce to the public available listings of NRC public meetings, toll-free telephone numbers, electronic bulletin boards, etc. when they become available in NRC.
- (4) Develop pamphlets for the general public covering basic facts on and NRC's role in nuclear waste, radiation, decommissioning of nuclear facilities, and current uses of radioisotopes. Complete a pamphlet on the process for resolving allegations concerning NRC regulated activities. Display these pamphlets and other appropriate material in the Exhibit Center space in the Two White Flint North building at NRC Headquarters.
- (5) Produce a new movie about the NRC that appeals to a broad audience and better reflects our philosophy and practice of openness and responsiveness to the public.
- (6) Develop guidelines for the staff to be more responsive to media inquires.
- (7) Work with other offices to update NUREG/BR-0010, *Citizen's Guide to U.S. NRC Information*, to ensure user-friendliness. Develop supplemental guidance for accessing electronic information at NRC.

- (8) Update pamphlets and fact sheets on the licensing process, low-level waste, and transportation of spent fuel.
- (9) Seek out opportunities throughout the agency to make information easily available to the public through press releases, radio/TV announcements, pamphlets, and speaking engagements.

Contact: Beth Hayden, Office of Public Affairs, 301-415-8200

## Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards

## Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste

### ACRS/ACNW Activities

#### *Background*

The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) and the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste (ACNW) provide an important link between the public and the NRC. They review significant portions of the agency's activities and encourage other government agencies, industry representatives, States, Indian Nations, and other interested parties to participate in their deliberations. In a real sense, the Committees act as a sounding board on various technical issues for all interested or affected parties.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) states that advisory committees are constituted to afford the public an opportunity to participate in the Government's decision-making processes. The act requires that, with few exceptions, each advisory committee meeting be open to the public, that agencies publish adequate advance notice of planned meetings in the *Federal Register*, and that meeting locations and times be reasonably accessible and convenient. We receive several requests annually from the public for the ACRS or the ACNW to review technical issues, and depending on the subject, we either forward them to the Executive Director for Operations for disposition or the cognizant committee reviews the issue. We carefully track the NRC Executive Director for Operations' responses to these requests.

Requests from the public to participate in ACRS/ACNW meetings are granted in almost all cases. ACRS/ACNW meeting presentation schedules, minutes, letter reports, and transcripts are always provided to NRC's Public Document Room (PDR).

#### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Respond in a timely manner to all public requests for ACRS or ACNW reviews of technical issues.

- (2) Request a declassification review of all classified committee records and make the resultant declassified records publicly available.
- (3) Respond timely and affirmatively to all public requests to participate in ACRS or ACNW meetings.
- (4) Ensure ACRS and ACNW meeting information is provided to the PDR pursuant to the FACA.
- (5) Provide more efficient and expeditious responses to public inquiries and quicker transmission of documents to the PDR through use of the new text management system of automated storage and retrieval of incoming and outgoing documents, including key reference documents.
- (6) Develop the ACRS/ACNW Mosaic *Home Page* (using Internet and LAN networking). The external page will allow worldwide public access to current ACRS/ACNW information, including meeting schedules and agendas; the internal page will involve a common interface with NRC data bases and provide the staff access to other non-NRC data bases, including those of licensees, public interest groups, and Congress.
- (7) Initiate integrated videoconferencing that combines video with data sharing. When this process is implemented, industry, individual citizens, and public interest groups will not have to be physically present to participate in advisory committee meetings.

Contact: John Larkins, ACRS/ACNW, 301-415-7360



## Office of the General Counsel

### Response to Public Inquiries

#### *Background*

The Office of the General Counsel has direct interaction with the public in the following areas:

- telephone inquiries concerning the application of NRC regulations to specific circumstances, or on the status of various regulatory activities;
- inquiries related to administrative and judicial proceedings on licensing, enforcement, and other issues; and
- inquiries related to the investigation and evaluation of claims under the Federal Tort Claims Acts.

The Office of the General Counsel does not have any formal procedures or guidance on the handling of telephone inquiries from the public.

#### *Planned Improvements*

- (1) Develop a set of formal procedures to provide guidance to OGC staff in responding to telephone inquiries from the public. These procedures will assure that inquiries will be handled in a timely, courteous, and responsive manner; they will assure that all inquiries are directed to the OGC or technical staff most likely to be able to address the matter; and they will assure that the responsive staff will endeavor to provide a clear and complete response to each telephone inquiry.
- (2) Add a new subsection to the Office of the General Counsel Operating Manual to incorporate the procedures developed regarding telephone inquiries from the public. This subsection will be distributed to all OGC employees with a memorandum from the General Counsel that will emphasize the importance of adhering to these procedures.

Contact: Jeffrey L. Bartlett, Office of the General Counsel,  
301-415-1514



Federal Recycling Program

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