



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

June 17, 2020

The Honorable John A. Barrasso  
Chairman, Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of May 14, 2020, expressing support for the agency's efforts to develop a technology-inclusive regulatory framework for advanced nuclear reactors. You also encouraged the Commission to identify actions to accelerate this work.

The NRC recognizes the importance of establishing a timely, effective, and efficient regulatory framework for advanced reactor applicants. Towards that end, the Commission recently approved the staff's "Technology-Inclusive, Risk-Informed, and Performance-Based Methodology To Inform the Licensing Basis and Content of Applications for Licenses, Certifications, and Approvals for Non-Light-Water Reactors" (SECY-19-0117), and is currently considering two staff proposals related to preparing for the review of advanced reactor designs. As you note in your letter, one proposal is the staff's "Rulemaking Plan on 'Risk-Informed, Technology-Inclusive Regulatory Framework for Advanced Reactors'" (SECY-20-0032). This paper contemplates the development of a regulatory framework to address performance requirements, design features, and programmatic controls for a wide variety of anticipated advanced nuclear reactor technologies and operating concepts. The staff's proposal also seeks to build upon other agency activities related to licensing basis event selection and evaluation, source terms, containment performance, generic environmental assessments, and emergency preparedness, as well as lessons learned from early advanced nuclear reactor licensing engagement. The draft schedule in the staff's paper recognizes that this would be a complex rulemaking with significant continued public interest and would thus entail extensive public outreach. The Commission will provide direction to the staff on the proposed approach and schedule, and alignment with any statutory deadlines, in its decision on the staff's rulemaking plan.

The second proposal before the Commission for a vote is "Results of Exploratory Process for Developing a Generic Environmental Impact Statement [GEIS] for the Construction and Operation of Advanced Nuclear Reactors" (SECY-20-0020). The Commission's July 29, 2019, letter to you described the staff's development of this paper, including the review of existing GEISs, experience with other small-scale facilities, and input from interested stakeholders.

Additionally, the NRC staff continues to engage with the U.S. Department of Energy, the nuclear industry, advanced reactor developers, international counterparts, and other stakeholders to maintain awareness of advanced reactor technology development and the short- and longer-term priorities for potential applicants. Together, these activities will support the development of a timely and predictable regulatory framework for advanced reactors.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or have your staff contact Eugene Dacus, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kristine L. Svinicki', with a stylized, cursive style.

Kristine L. Svinicki

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable John A. Barrasso  
Chairman, Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cory Booker  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510