



INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY 2021-2025





The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is well-respected internationally in nuclear safety and security regulation. The agency International Strategy builds directly on the Commission's 2014 [International Policy Statement](#) and has two primary aims:

- to leverage this reputation to positively influence the development of new, and maintenance of existing, nuclear safety and security regimes around the world; and
- to target the staff's international engagement to opportunities that will directly inform the agency's domestic mission objectives.

Recognizing that nuclear safety and security involves transparency and cooperative efforts amongst NRC's partner agencies, the Strategy's overall goal is to foster and maintain collaboration with international counterparts and multilateral organizations to positively influence global and domestic nuclear safety and security. This complements the NRC's domestic [mission](#), broadly aligns with the agency's [Principles of Good Regulation](#), and is tied to multiple [NRC Strategic Plan](#) Safety, Security, and Openness strategies.

The Strategy encourages the integration of the NRC's programs and activities and broader U.S. Government foreign policy and national security objectives through promoting worldwide nuclear safety and security, and supporting the development of strong, independent, well-funded regulatory counterparts. In addition, the Strategy recognizes the need to leverage limited resources through prioritization of international activities.



The NRC's International Strategy consists of five strategic objectives:

-  **Excel** in executing the NRC's statutory and legally mandated activities efficiently and effectively.
-  **Integrate** NRC international activities with broader U.S. Government national security and foreign policy priorities.
-  **Build and maintain cooperative regulatory partnerships** in specific regions of the world that are of strategic importance to the U.S. Government and will enable the agency to learn from its counterparts and advance its domestic activities.
-  **Demonstrate leadership** in the international regulatory community through involvement in key bilateral and multilateral fora in which the NRC is advanced in its thinking or progress and in areas of strategic importance to the U.S. Government.
-  **Provide assistance** to countries to develop or strengthen their regulatory programs.

Additional details on the goals associated with each objective follow:



EXCEL:

By statutory mandate, the NRC is the U.S. Government's export and import licensing authority for nuclear equipment, components, and material. NRC activities in the export and import area have continued to increase as other countries have established or expanded their nuclear energy programs. In addition, the U.S. Government is party to numerous conventions and treaties for which the NRC has specific implementation responsibilities. Finally, there are a variety of Executive Orders that impact the strategic direction of the NRC's work.





The NRC expects that high-priority external areas with the potential to influence the direction of the NRC's work in legislatively mandated activities may include the following:

- Continued focus on readiness to license exports of small modular and advanced reactors under Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR) Part 110* to countries of geopolitical significance to the U.S. Government.
- U.S. Government efforts to shape foreign civil nuclear cooperation policy and negotiate new civil nuclear cooperation agreements and memoranda of understanding.
- Emphasis on universalization of legally binding international nuclear safety and security instruments.
- Emphasis on sustainability consistent with other executive commitments, such as to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and associated guidance.

Therefore, the NRC's specific objectives under **EXCEL** are to:

- Enhance the export and import licensing infrastructure and information sharing to efficiently and effectively accommodate potential increased demands for NRC licenses to export small modular and advanced reactors under 10 CFR Part 110.
- 

- 
- Provide support to U.S. Government interactions with the Nuclear Suppliers Group to ensure export controls are aligned internationally.
 - Provide leadership and promote transparency in fulfilling U.S. obligations under various international conventions and treaties with the goal of influencing their direction in light of the NRC's equities.
 - Provide support and leadership with the relevant U.S. Government agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), and international counterparts in strengthening international safety, safeguards, and security.
 - Support cooperation with international counterparts to maintain global material control and accounting for civilian uses of nuclear materials.
 - Provide support and leadership to international partners to establish and sustain regulatory programs to enhance the control of radioactive materials globally.
 - Support cooperation with relevant U.S. Government agencies to ensure that radioactive sources are used safely and securely throughout the entire lifecycle, consistent with U.S. Government law, commitments, and policy.
- 



INTEGRATE:

The NRC recognizes that promoting worldwide nuclear safety and security and supporting the development of strong, independent regulatory counterparts is directly tied to its mission-critical work. Furthermore, the NRC plays a key role in implementing broader U.S. Government foreign policy and national security objectives. The integration of NRC international activities with U.S. Government priorities is an important part of the strategy and will help to improve our efficiency and effectiveness.





The NRC will need to stay closely aligned with U.S. Government partners to ensure that policy evolution, and associated requests for engagement, take into account and do not conflict with the NRC's status as a non-promotional, independent regulatory agency. This may include:

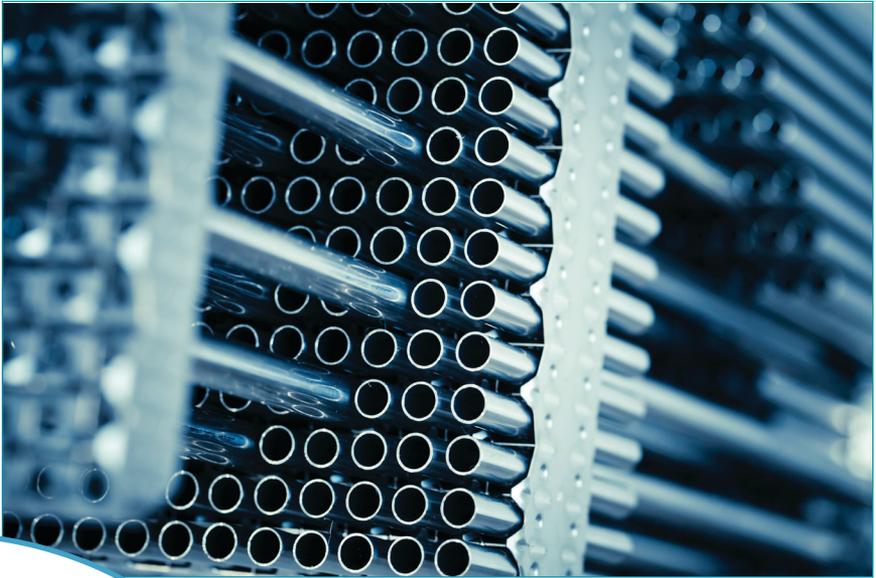
- Requests by other U.S. Government agencies for the NRC to participate in bilateral engagement activities, or complementary bilateral regulatory engagement activities, with countries considering U.S. technology.
- Evolving U.S. Government policy priorities, such as identified countries of interest for non-binding and binding bilateral agreements, and policy constraints regarding countries of concern.
- Calls to enhance international cooperation on nuclear safety and security, either bilaterally (as part of U.S. Government delegations or in regulatory engagement complementary to U.S. Government civil nuclear policy objectives) or multilaterally (e.g., in shaping the drafting and/or revision of IAEA documents).

Therefore, the NRC's specific objectives under **INTEGRATE** are to:

- Establish and maintain effective partnerships with U.S. Government partners and collaborate routinely to leverage the NRC's international engagement to help
- 

fulfill foreign policy or national security objectives, as appropriate recognizing the NRC's statutory independence and non-promotional status.

- Maintain awareness of foreign policy decisions and restrictions that may influence or preclude certain NRC engagement.
- Capture and communicate the NRC staff's international perspectives and experience to inform the NRC's regulatory programs and their associated activities to develop technical bases, and consider international priorities in planning, budgeting, and reporting processes.





PARTNER:

The NRC promotes global nuclear safety and security by developing and maintaining cooperative relationships in specific regions of the world of strategic importance to the agency and to the broader U.S. Government. These relationships foster, among other things, cooperative research programs and global material control and accounting efforts for the peaceful uses of nuclear materials. They also provide for the sharing of international operating experience and best practices on licensing and oversight of nuclear power plants, research reactors, nuclear facilities, and radioactive materials with international counterpart regulators and with technical support organizations.

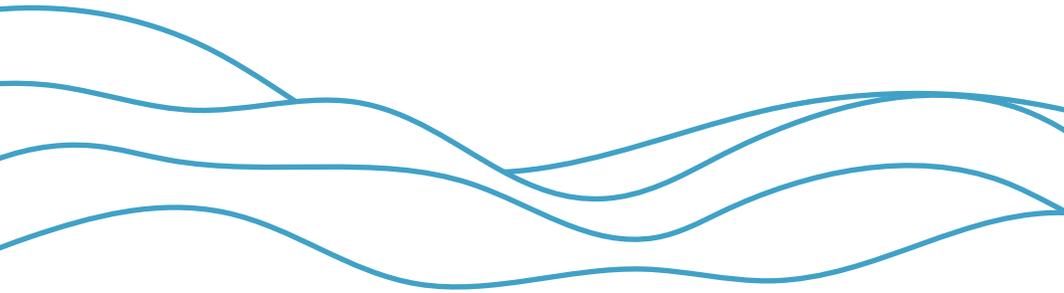
By building new relationships and continuing existing relationships with international regulatory counterparts, the NRC gains valuable information to benchmark the agency's ongoing domestic activities. In addition, the NRC's regulatory partnerships can yield insights and enable us to leverage innovative initiatives worldwide to inform NRC's objective of becoming a modern, risk-informed regulator.





Additionally, recognizing that issues in one portion of the world immediately affect other areas, there is a need for routine, clear, and open communications and information sharing. The NRC will continue to foster strategic global partnerships in all regions in targeted ways to promote domestic and global nuclear safety and security by creating and taking advantage of opportunities to increase cooperation and interactions.

The staff anticipates the following influences on the NRC's priorities regarding partnerships with international regulatory counterparts:

- Continued interest by certain international partners to collaborate by sharing information on design certification and licensing of small modular and advanced reactors.
 - The continued need to leverage limited resources to conduct critical nuclear safety research in areas such as aging management, advanced fuels, etc.
 - Engagement with countries that have made advances in permanent high-level waste disposal.
- 



Therefore, the NRC's specific objectives under **PARTNER** are to:

- Develop and support continued partnership efforts with countries with mature or developing regulatory programs to gain valuable insights to inform domestic activities.
 - Embark on strategic, targeted engagements to inform the NRC's regulatory activities and help advance U.S. Government positions.
 - Support cooperative activities in multilateral and regional fora.
 - Identify opportunities for bilateral personnel exchanges to maximize reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience.
 - Partner with the NEA, IAEA, and international research organizations to foster costsharing cooperative research to gain data necessary for accomplishing the NRC's safety mission.
- 

LEAD:

To positively influence the global nuclear safety and security regime to develop regulatory frameworks that emphasize safety and security as a foremost objective, the NRC will demonstrate leadership in key bilateral and multilateral fora.



Some external factors that may influence the NRC's international leadership priorities in the coming years include:

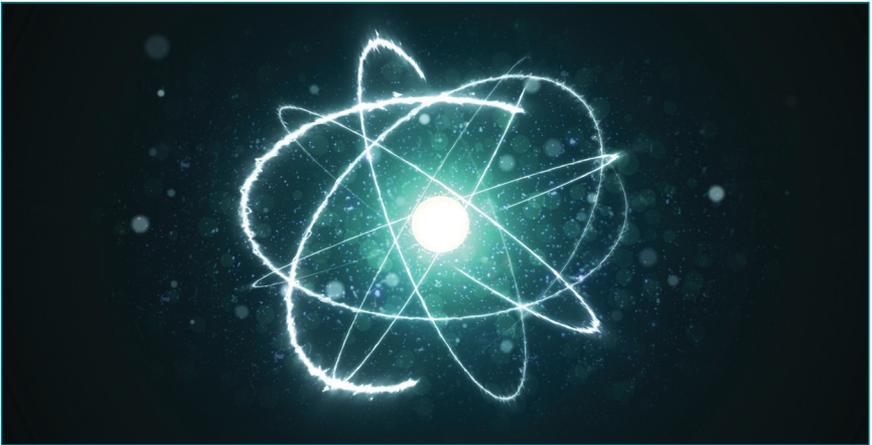
-  It is important that the NRC continues to ensure that NRC regulations remain consistent with proposed revisions to international standards and guidance, and seek to influence revision processes early and prioritize the most significant documents.

- ❖ The NRC's strong presence and regulatory influence is critical to emphasize the need for a strong global nuclear safety and security regime. The U.S. Government will continue to seek this expertise in its efforts to combat malign foreign influences, as appropriate consistent with the NRC's status as an independent regulator.
- ❖ IAEA Member States may continue to emphasize concepts such as the elimination of all risk of radiation exposure or radioactive release and offsite contamination in the event of an incident, and the development of additional guidance or conversion of non-legally binding instruments to legally binding conventions, which is inconsistent with U.S. laws and NRC's regulations.

Therefore, the NRC's specific objectives under **LEAD** are to:

- ❖ Provide opportunities for staff to participate in strategic peer review missions.
- ❖ Place staff in key leadership and technical positions in multilateral organizations.
- ❖ Lead multilateral fora and initiatives on key nuclear safety and security issues and in areas of strategic importance to the U.S. Government.
- ❖ Ensure appropriate representation at U.S.-led interagency initiatives.

- ❧ Participate and provide leadership in international safety research activities.
- ❧ Participate in, and influence the development of, international safety standards and security guidance to offer critical expertise and perspectives to inform the drafting and revision of international standards and guidance documents.
- ❧ Advance risk management concepts through international standards and guidance for graded approaches in licensing and oversight of operating and new reactors.
- ❧ Promote openness and transparency in regulatory and oversight activities.





ASSIST:

The NRC's international assistance program is focused on providing information, knowledge, and training to other countries to assist them in developing and enhancing their national regulatory infrastructure and programs for nuclear and radiation safety, security, and safeguards, consistent with U.S. Government foreign policy and national security priorities. These resources are expended without the expectation that the exchange will return immediate benefits to an NRC regulatory program area. However, such exchanges are critical tools for establishing multilateral coalitions, enhancing global nuclear safety, security and safeguards, and strengthening regulatory programs for nuclear power plants, research reactors, and radioactive materials.

The NRC assists countries that are seeking to establish, enhance, or expand nuclear power and/or research reactor programs and countries that use or are considering using various nuclear technologies for medical and industrial applications.

Through its international regulatory assistance activities, the NRC can positively influence new entrant countries in their development of a sound, independent, technical competent nuclear safety and security infrastructure that mirrors key principles of the NRC's infrastructure, irrespective of the country's chosen technology. In addition, achieving effective regulatory oversight ultimately results in radioactive materials in use being

utilized in a more safe and secure manner. This, in turn, advances a key national security goal of helping prevent unauthorized use of, or access to, these materials.



External factors such as the following may impact the NRC’s regulatory assistance priorities:

- Continued global interest in nuclear power, particularly in small modular and advanced reactors, by a variety of countries without existing or experienced regulatory bodies.
- Continued U.S. Government prioritization of nuclear and radioactive material security, including the importance of tracking and securing radioactive sources in developing countries as part of fulfilling the U.S. Government’s international nuclear security priorities.



Therefore, the NRC's specific objectives under **ASSIST** are to:

- ④ Provide timely, curated regulatory assistance to new entrant countries, or countries that are seeking to strengthen their regulatory programs, particularly related to large light water and small modular reactor technology.
 - ④ Engage routinely with U.S. Government partners and multilateral organizations to identify countries for which regulatory assistance can contribute to meeting broader foreign policy or national security objectives.
 - ④ Identify and monitor evolving geopolitical, safety, or security situations that may prompt emergent assistance needs.
 - ④ Engage with multilateral organizations and other donor countries to leverage existing expertise and minimize duplication.
- 



U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
August 2021

www.nrc.gov

Stay Connected

