



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

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Edward Markey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air,
Climate, and Nuclear Safety
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 submitting the "Semiannual Status Report on the Licensing Activities and Regulatory Duties of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission." The enclosed report covers NRC activities from April 1, 2022, through September 30, 2022, and includes a list of rulemaking activities, their priority and schedule, and actions taken to adhere to the backfit rule, as directed in House Report 116-449 accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.

During this reporting period, the NRC completed two major regulatory milestones. In July 2022, the Commission directed the staff to issue a final rule to certify the first small modular reactor design (NuScale) for use in the United States. In August 2022, the NRC authorized Southern Nuclear Operating Company to load nuclear fuel and begin operations at Vogtle Unit 3, becoming the first plant to begin operations under a Part 52 combined license.

Other Noteworthy Activities in the Past 6 Months

In April 2022, the Commission held its first offsite Commission meetings in over 40 years. These meetings, held in New Mexico, provided the Commission with an overview of the 2020-2029 plan of interagency actions to address the impacts of uranium contamination on the Navajo Nation, and updates on, and lessons learned from, the remediation activities at former uranium mill sites throughout the West, particularly, at the Northeast Church Rock Mine and United Nuclear Corporation Mill Site.¹ The Commission also heard first-hand accounts from the Navajo Tribal community members of the Red Water Pond Road on the impacts of uranium contamination on the Navajo Nation.

In April 2022, the NRC also issued its Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2022-2026, which provides the roadmap for the agency's ongoing implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. The Strategic Plan will inform agency decision making regarding major new acquisitions, information technology, strategic human capital planning, evaluations, and other evidence building and evidence capacity building investments. In addition, the Strategic Plan explains that the enhanced focus on organizational health is vital

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/documents/nnaum-ten-year-plan-2021-01.pdf>

to ensure that the agency can continue to perform as a modern, risk-informed regulator, prepare for an evolving future, maintain and improve performance, and achieve mission excellence in a diverse, inclusive, and innovative environment.

In May 2022, the NRC awarded \$9 million through 25 grants to 20 academic institutions, including 2 minority-serving institutions, under its University Nuclear Leadership Program. The program bolsters nuclear engineering and related programs to prepare the next generation of scientists and engineers for evolving future challenges. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for education grants to be awarded in 2023, was issued in July 2022.

In June 2022, the NRC graduated its inaugural Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network (NRAN) cohort and onboarded 23 recent university graduates majoring in engineering and science for the second NRAN cohort. To address current and anticipated vacancies at the agency in the next 12-18 months, the NRC implemented a significant recruitment effort and as a result onboarded 206 new external hires, with an additional 78 expected to onboard in quarter 1 of fiscal year 2023 following completion of security background investigations. These hires, along with the pipeline we are creating through the student programs, will ensure that the agency continues to fulfill its important safety and security mission well into the future.

In September 2022, the NRC participated in the International Atomic Energy Agency's 66th General Conference in Vienna, Austria. During the conference, the NRC signed arrangements and agreement extensions with 11 countries for bilateral cooperation and assistance activities for technical exchanges, regulatory information sharing, temporary personnel exchanges, and assistance partnerships for regulatory program development. The NRC also discussed matters of mutual interest with more than a dozen regulatory agencies from other countries, including Ukrainian regulatory counterparts, to express the NRC's continued support as they face many challenges stemming from the Russian invasion. These bilateral agreements and counterpart meetings enhance the safety and security of peaceful nuclear activities in the U.S. and worldwide.

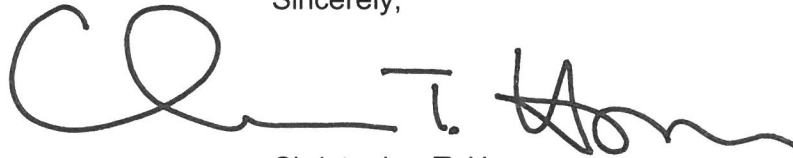
During this reporting period, the NRC staff conducted 95 security inspections at commercial nuclear power plants and Category I fuel cycle facilities. As detailed in the enclosed report, this included a total of 11 full scope force-on-force inspections involving simulated attacks on the selected facility to test the effectiveness of the licensee's physical security program.

From April 2022 through September 2022, the NRC implemented several enhancements to its information technology infrastructure to ensure an effective work environment. This included upgrading the intranet to Kentico; simplifying and modernizing time and labor tracking through the update to HCM Cloud; and implementing federated sharing in Microsoft Teams as a faster method to contact colleagues in other Federal agencies. The NRC held 331 public meetings to address a range of NRC issues. The NRC also processed 128 Freedom of Information Act requests and received an additional 119 requests during the reporting period.

The NRC continued using the Coronavirus Disease 2019 precautionary measures to help ensure the health and safety of its workforce, licensees' staff, and stakeholders in accordance with guidance provided by the Federal Government, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Office of Personnel Management, as well as State and local authorities. The impacts to NRC licensing activities and regulatory duties during this reporting period were minimal and, where appropriate, are noted in the enclosed report.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. T. Hanson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a distinct "T." followed by "Hanson".

Christopher T. Hanson

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: Senator James Inhofe

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable Edward Markey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air,
Climate, and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Senator James Inhofe

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman, Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Senator Shelley Moore Capito

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on Energy
and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers

The Honorable Bobby L. Rush
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative Fred Upton

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment
and Climate Change
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative David B. McKinley

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative Mike Simpson

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Senator John Kennedy