

Office of Investigations Annual Report Fiscal Year 2025

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Office of Investigations Annual Report Fiscal Year 2025

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ABSTRACT

This report provides the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission with an overview of the activities, mission, and purpose of the Office of Investigations (OI). The information that follows also details the case inventory, priorities, and highlights of significant cases that OI completed during fiscal year 2025 (see staff requirements memorandum COMJC-89-8, "Reports on the Results of OI Investigations," dated June 30, 1989). This is the 37th OI annual report.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It is a privilege to submit our Office of Investigations (OI) annual report for fiscal year (FY) 2025. First, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the OI team for their professionalism, resilience, and commitment throughout a year of significant achievement. These qualities enable us to conduct thorough and independent investigations.



OI remained steadfast in its responsibility to conduct independent, objective, timely, and high-quality investigations. Investigative results were a defining feature of FY 2025. From October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025, OI concluded 62 investigations and 36 assists to staff, while reducing our average case life cycle by 18 percent. These outcomes reflect the dedication and expertise of our team and their ability to deliver timely, high-quality investigative products. Among the year's highlights, OI partnered with the U.S. Department of Justice to prosecute a defendant under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, an achievement that underscores the impact of our part in advancing the mission of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to protect public health and safety and advance the Nation's common defense and security.

FY 2025 was also a year of progress and adaptation. The Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024 (ADVANCE Act) continues to position OI, alongside the NRC, the U.S. Government, and the nuclear industry, at the forefront of innovation and change. This legislation provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen nuclear safety and security as energy production evolves across the United States and globally. In direct support of the ADVANCE Act, OI worked diligently in FY 2025 to expand strategic partnerships and reinforce existing relationships with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. OI has taken a "whole-of-government approach" in establishing an interagency law enforcement group, expanding interagency collaboration and information sharing.

Programmatic efficiency and fiscal responsibility also remained priorities. Operating under a continuing resolution for much of the year, OI exercised disciplined financial stewardship. We maximized the use of leveraged technology, implemented a decentralized law enforcement training model to reduce travel costs, and leveraged Federal law enforcement partnerships to modernize law enforcement equipment, enhancing mission capability at little to no cost.

Looking ahead, OI will continue to build on these successes, strengthening investigative capabilities, deepening partnerships, and maintaining readiness to address emerging challenges. The accomplishments detailed in this report reflect the professionalism and dedication of our team, and I am confident that OI remains prepared to deliver results that uphold the NRC's mission and protect the public interest.

With appreciation,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Ashley'.

Thomas G. Ashley
Director, Office of Investigations
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

FOCUSING ON OUR MISSION

As the law enforcement arm of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Office of Investigations (OI) protects the American public by investigating allegations of criminal, civil, and administrative violations by NRC licensees.

Since 1982, OI has investigated a broad range of violations. OI continues to focus on criminal violations that undermine the safe and secure use of radioactive materials, the common defense and security of the United States, and the protection of the environment, such as the following:

- criminal violations that pose a particularly significant risk of harm to public health and safety
- criminal conduct, including making material false statements to the NRC during the regulatory process that affect proper regulatory actions by the agency
- criminal violations by individuals who discriminate against whistleblowers who raise and pursue certain protected activities regulated by the NRC
- criminal violations in situations for which the normal regulatory process may be unable to remedy the problem
- criminal violations by individuals and organizations that attempt to introduce counterfeit, fraudulent, or suspect items into the nuclear supply chain
- proactive investigative partnerships with other Federal, State, local, and international law enforcement agencies

FISCAL YEAR 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

During fiscal year (FY) 2025, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Office of Investigations (OI) maintained a mission-driven, high-performing workforce. As part of the process, OI continued its commitment to investigative independence, excellence, and adherence to established quality standards. OI personnel include both criminal investigators, who bring a wide range of experience from across the Federal enterprise, and professional support staff, whose work continually exceeds the expectations of internal and external stakeholders.

The majority of investigations that OI closed in FY 2025 involved operating reactors, closely followed by investigations related to materials. The overall number of closed investigations increased from that in FY 2024. This report discusses the specific numbers in detail and notes the following FY 2025 highlights:

- OI contributed to the NRC's safety strategic goals by conducting effective and efficient investigations to ensure that licensees meet the agency's regulatory requirements. In FY 2025, OI conducted 137 high-quality, thorough, and timely cases and closed 98 of them. Of the 137 cases, 47 were carried over from FY 2024.
- OI closed 62 investigations during this reporting period, of which 100 percent developed sufficient information to substantiate or not substantiate allegations of wrongdoing. Of these findings, 100 percent were reached in 12 months or less, exceeding OI's performance standard of 90 percent for reactor and materials investigations.
- Of the 36 assists to staff closed, 100 percent were closed within 90 days, exceeding OI's performance measure of 90 percent.
- OI processed 19 actions resulting from Freedom of Information Act requests during FY 2025, a 38 percent increase from the FY 2024 total of 14.
- OI conducted and completed 100 percent of annual field office and OI headquarters assessments and internal reviews to comply with requirements for organizational effectiveness. OI further ensured that it adhered to all applicable U.S. Department of Justice policies and Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency guidelines.

1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

HISTORY

In 1982, with the support of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) established the Office of Investigations (OI) as part of its effort to improve the quality of its investigative work and to support the agency's overall mission. The Commission announced the formation of OI on April 20, 1982, to improve the NRC's capability "to perform credible, thorough, timely and objective investigations."¹ OI is responsible for conducting independent investigations either at the request of specific NRC officials or on its own initiative. OI subsequently hired experienced Federal criminal investigators, a practice it continues today, who probe alleged wrongdoing in accordance with DOJ guidelines and the Quality Standards for Investigations established by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE).

AUTHORITY

The Commission delegated to the director of OI the authority to take the necessary steps to accomplish the office's mission, as described in Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) 1.36, "Office of Investigations" (see section 161(c) of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (Title 42 of the *United States Code* (42 U.S.C.) section 2201(c)), and section 206 of the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. § 5846)). OI jurisdiction extends to the investigation of alleged wrongdoing by licensees, certificate holders, permittees, and applicants; by contractors, subcontractors, and vendors of such entities; and by management, supervisors, and other personnel employed by such entities who may have violated the Atomic Energy Act, the Energy Reorganization Act, or rules, orders, or license conditions issued by the Commission.

Additionally, during investigations, OI may uncover issues that are potentially significant to safety that may or may not be related to wrongdoing. OI promptly delivers such information to the NRC technical staff for appropriate action. OI also provides professional investigative expertise to the NRC staff in the form of assists to staff. Generally, these assists to staff are associated with matters of regulatory concern for which the NRC staff has requested OI's investigative expertise but that do not initially involve a specific indication of wrongdoing.

MISSION

As stated in the NRC's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022–2026,² the agency's mission is to license and regulate the Nation's civilian use of radioactive materials, to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety, to promote the common defense and security, and to protect the environment. The plan defines the strategic goals to ensure the safe and secure use of radioactive materials, to continue to foster a healthy organization, and to inspire stakeholder confidence in the NRC. The plan also provides an overview of the NRC's responsibilities and lays out how the agency uses data and evidence to inform decision-making to accomplish objectives and strategies to achieve its goals.

OI fully aligns with the NRC's regulatory programs and strategic values and goals to provide for the safe civilian use of radioactive materials and nuclear power. OI's national investigations program consistently operates under the agency's Principles of Good Regulation to support regulatory actions that are effective, realistic, and timely.

¹ NRC Announcement No. 38, "Formation of the New Office of Investigations," dated April 20, 1982.

² NUREG-1614, Volume 8, "Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2022–2026," issued April 2022.

2 THE OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

The director of OI reports to the Deputy Executive Director for Operations and supports the reactor and materials programs.

OI is an independent national investigations program that consists of four regional field offices led by special agents-in-charge who directly support the regional administrators and report directly to OI headquarters senior staff. The main body of OI personnel is made up of Federal criminal investigators and special agents (GG-1811s), as well as professional support and technical staff located in both OI field offices and headquarters.

All NRC OI special agents have extensive backgrounds and experience in Federal criminal investigations. During fiscal year (FY) 2025, the professional cadre of OI special agents had an average of nearly two decades of Federal law enforcement experience. OI special agents have previously served in law enforcement roles at other Federal agencies, including the U.S. Secret Service; U.S. Department of Energy; Naval Criminal Investigative Service; U.S. Department of Labor; Air Force Office of Special Investigations; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Coast Guard Investigative Service; Army Criminal Investigative Division; Diplomatic Security Service; and various offices of the Inspector General.

OI plans and conducts investigations of allegations of wrongdoing to determine whether there are willful or discriminatory actions in violation of NRC regulations and criminal statutes. OI also develops and implements policies, procedures, and quality control standards for investigations. OI conducts investigations in accordance with DOJ guidelines and the CIGIE Quality Standards for Investigations. Additionally, OI maintains proactive investigative partnerships with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

3 QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS

The OI quality assurance reviews (QARs) are annual self-assessments of the office's national investigations program. Each year, OI selects a team of senior personnel to conduct the QAR of headquarters and each field office. The QARs aim to support the goal of continuous improvement and to assess three major focus areas: operations, management, and administration.

The 2025 QAR addressed the following items:

- internal NRC office stakeholder meetings and interviews
- random selection of case samples for quality overview
- inventory verification of sensitive equipment for law enforcement
- program quality checks
- OI data system review

During the process, the QAR team reviewed a random selection of 20 closed cases. The case reviews did not produce derogatory information adversely impacting OI's compliance with professional standards. A review of OI operational programs found that OI was generally in compliance with all pertinent governing policies and procedures.

The OI programmatic review also involved formal meetings with NRC officials, including the Office of the Executive Director for Operations staff, regional administrators, the Office of the General Counsel, and allegations and enforcement personnel. The discussions with senior staff provided feedback on OI headquarters' and regions' overall performance, collaboration, and input on the delivery of the office's work products. The stakeholders reported overall satisfaction with the OI program and provided positive feedback on their interactions with the office's staff. They also offered valuable recommendations and suggestions on OI's investigative work products.

At the conclusion of the QAR, the team conducted exit briefings with both SAICs and OI's senior leadership to confirm and address the noted findings and recommendations. This final step emphasized the validation of data supporting OI's continued adherence to professional standards, as well as internal and NRC policies and procedures.

4 CASES

Figure 1 shows the OI case inventory, which includes all investigations³ and assists to staff⁴ conducted from FY 2021 through FY 2025. The total case inventory in FY 2025 was 137, a 6 percent increase from 129 in FY 2024.

This total includes 100 investigations (56 developed in FY 2025 plus 44 carried over from FY 2024) and 37 assists to staff (34 developed in FY 2025 plus 3 carried over from FY 2024).

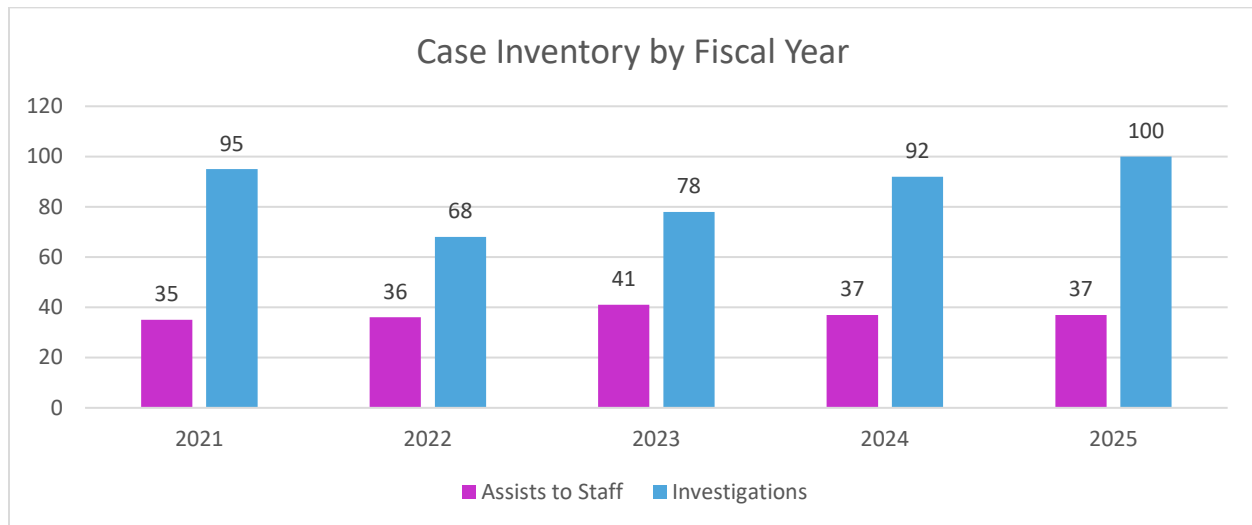


Figure 1 Case Inventory by Fiscal Year

³ An investigation is a detailed and systematic collection, development, and examination of evidence and other relevant information to uncover the facts and circumstances or to establish the truth concerning potential wrongdoing within the jurisdiction of the NRC.

⁴ Assists to staff are cases that are brief, focused inquiries not involving a specific allegation of wrongdoing. OI does not evaluate the concerns addressed in assists to staff for substantiation. Assists to staff provide the NRC staff with clarifying information about concerns to better inform the decision-making process, allowing the agency to pursue the most appropriate action.

5 CASES OPENED

Table 1 shows the number of cases opened by category from FY 2021 through FY 2025, and figure 2 gives the percentage of cases opened in FY 2025 by category of alleged violation. OI opened 90 cases in FY 2025 in the categories listed below, which is a 10 percent increase from FY 2024. The number of investigations of suspected material false statements increased by 57 percent, and violations of other NRC regulatory requirements decreased by 15 percent. In FY 2025, the number of discrimination investigations increased by 21 percent, and the number of assists to staff increased by 13 percent.

Table 1 Cases Opened by Category

Category	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Total	65	70	82	82	90
Material False Statements	6	13	10	7	11
Violations of Other NRC Regulatory Requirements	21	19	20	26	22
Discrimination	11	10	16	19	23
Assists to Staff	27	28	36	30	34

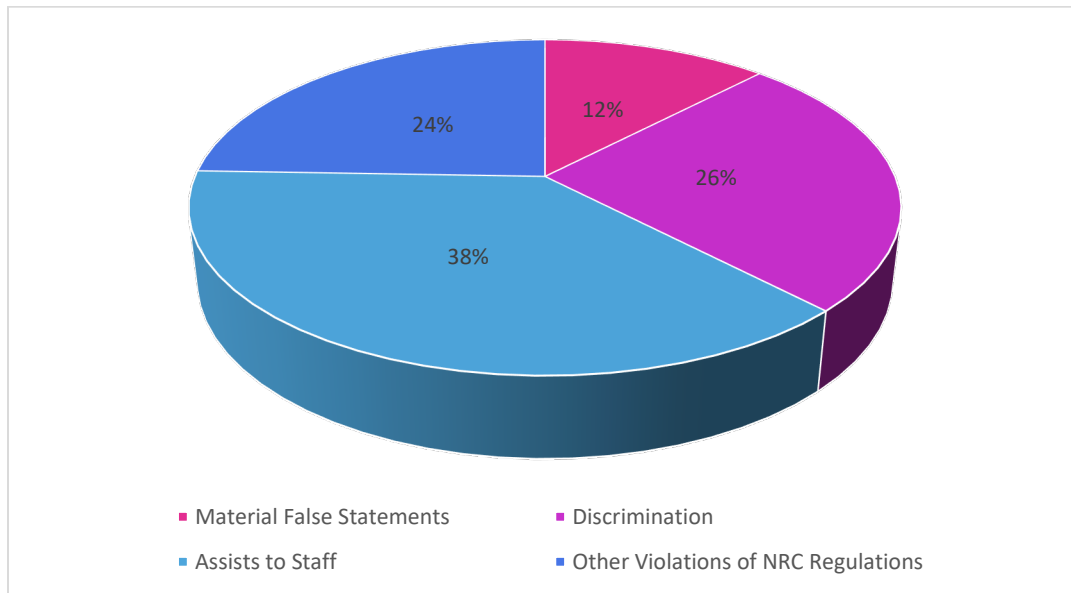


Figure 2 Cases Opened in FY 2025 by Category of Alleged Violation

Figure 3 shows the distribution of cases opened during FY 2021 through FY 2025 for the reactor and materials programs. From FY 2024 to FY 2025, the overall number of reactor cases decreased by 2 percent. Reactor investigations increased by 8 percent, and reactor-related assists to staff decreased by 27 percent. The number of materials cases increased by 36 percent. There was a 7 percent decrease in the number of materials investigations and a 73 percent increase in the number of materials-related assists to staff.

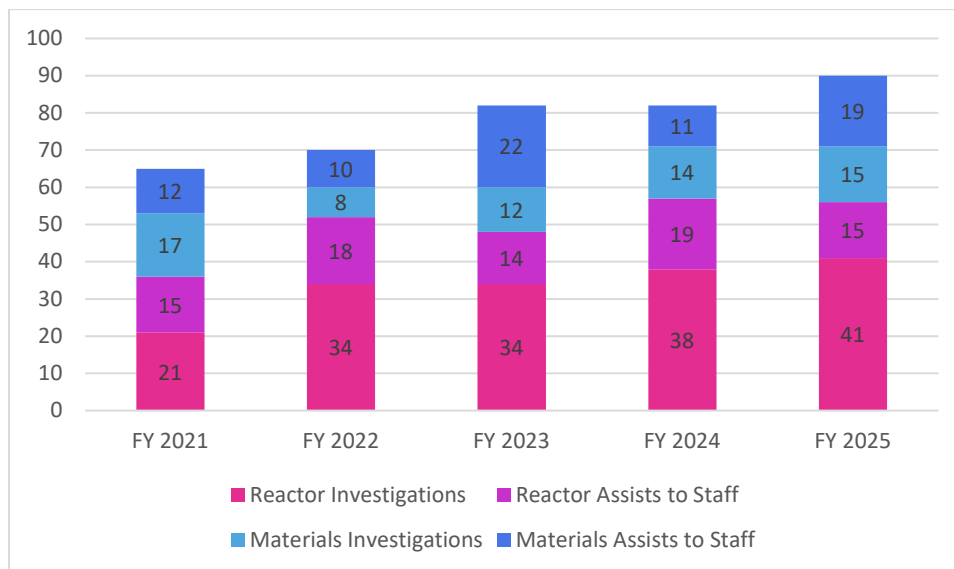


Figure 3 Reactors and Materials Cases Opened from FY 2021 through FY 2025

Total FY 2025 Reactor Cases: 56

Reactor investigations: 41

Reactor assists to staff: 15

Total FY 2025 Materials Cases: 34

Materials investigations: 15

Materials assists to staff: 19

6 CASES CLOSED

Table 2 shows the number of cases closed by category from FY 2021 through FY 2025, and figure 4 shows cases closed in FY 2025 by category of alleged violation. OI closed 98 cases in FY 2025 in the categories listed below, representing a 20 percent increase from the number closed in FY 2024. Investigations of material false statements decreased 9 percent, while investigations involving violations of other NRC regulatory requirements increased by 42 percent. Discrimination investigations increased by 39 percent, and assists to staff increased by 6 percent.

Table 2 Cases Closed by Category

Category	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Total	96	67	72	82	98
Material False Statements	15	3	12	11	10
Violations of Other NRC Regulatory Requirements	38	21	18	19	27
Discrimination	16	12	8	18	25
Assists to Staff	27	31	34	34	36

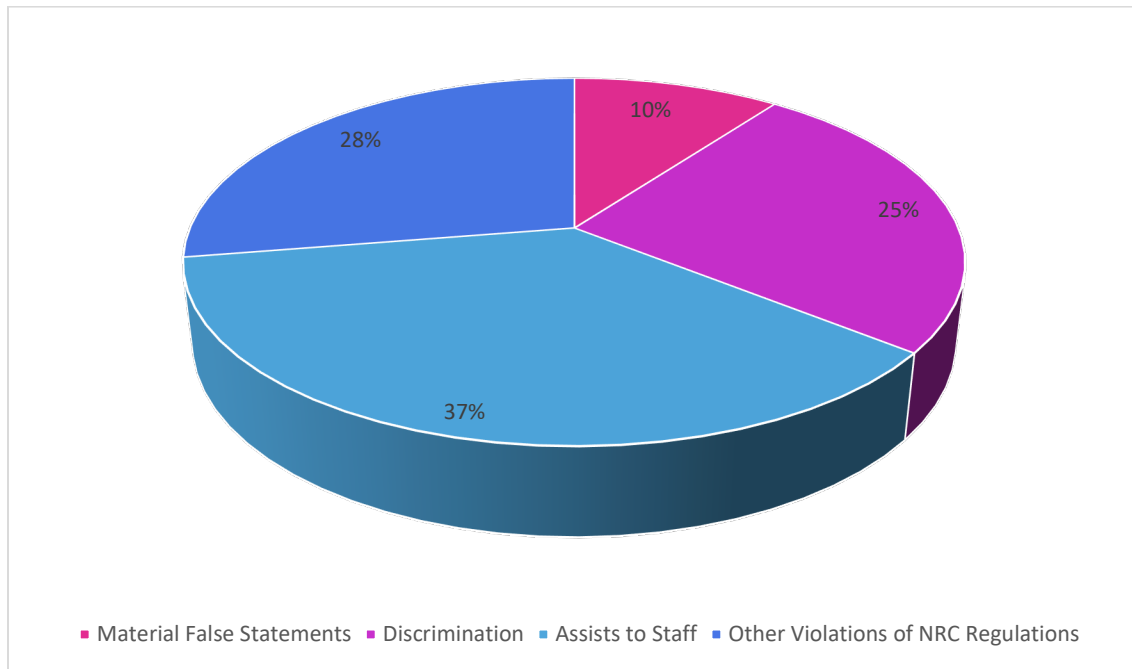


Figure 4 Cases Closed in FY 2025 by Category of Alleged Violation

Figure 5 shows the cases closed from FY 2021 through FY 2025 for the reactor and materials programs. OI closed 98 cases in FY 2025, which includes 62 investigations and 36 assists to staff. From FY 2024 to FY 2025, the overall number of reactor cases closed increased by 5 percent. Reactor investigations closed increased by 22 percent, and closure of reactor-related assists to staff decreased by 24 percent.

The overall number of materials cases closed increased by 52 percent for the same period. Materials investigations closed increased by 50 percent, and closure of materials-related assists to staff increased by 54 percent.

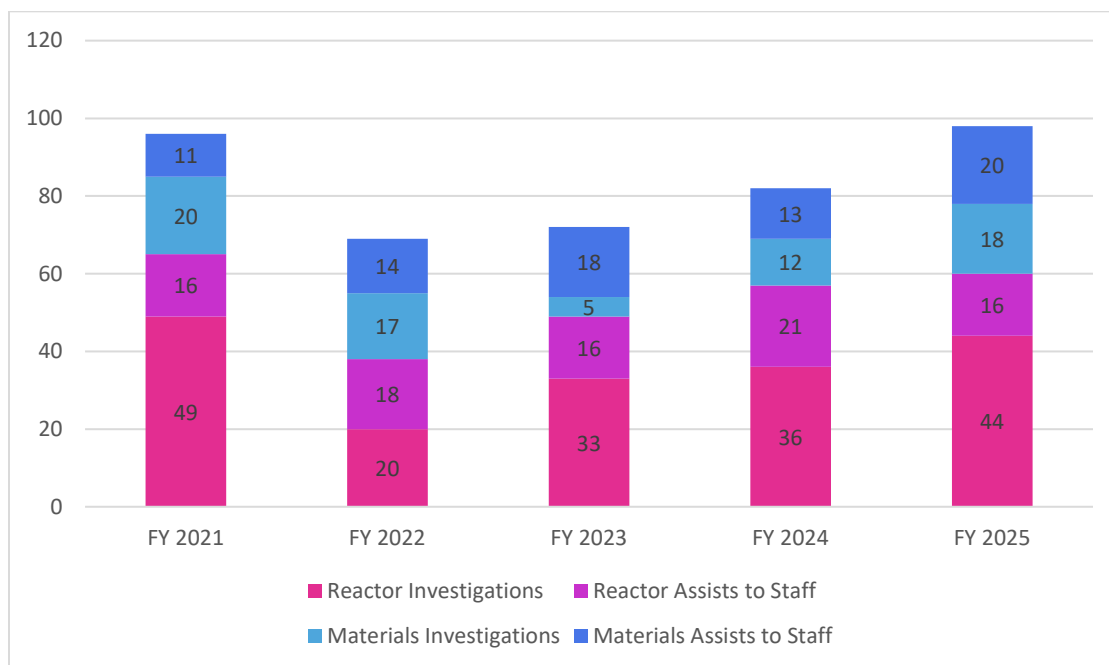


Figure 5 Reactor and Materials Cases Closed from FY 2021 through FY 2025

Total FY 2025 Reactor Cases: 60

Reactor investigations: 44

Reactor assists to staff: 16

Total FY 2025 Materials Cases: 38

Materials investigations: 18

Materials assists to staff: 20

7 SIGNIFICANT INVESTIGATIONS

This section highlights criminal indictments and investigative conclusions by OI. Final enforcement action by the NRC or the DOJ is pending unless otherwise stated.

Falsification of Training Records

An OI investigation did not substantiate allegations that reactor operator candidates at a nuclear power plant deliberately falsified training records by signing off on watches that had not been completed. Although OI did not substantiate wrongdoing, the investigation uncovered widespread misunderstanding of the applicable regulatory requirements. Insufficient evidence was found to support claims of wrongdoing.

Falsification of Records Involving Spill of Radioactive Material

An OI investigation substantiated allegations that the radiation safety officer (RSO) at a licensee facility engaged in deliberate misconduct by failing to maintain information related to a significant event that was complete and accurate in all material respects. The results of this investigation remain under regulatory review by the NRC staff.

Failure to Report Significant Event and Falsification of Records

An OI investigation substantiated allegations that a senior reactor operator at a nuclear power plant engaged in deliberate misconduct by submitting inaccurate documentation in its corrective action program. The evidence also showed that a licensed reactor operator acted with careless disregard by bypassing procedural steps, and a radiation protection technician failed to properly survey and decontaminate exposed personnel. Based on these findings, the NRC identified six apparent violations, including three involving wrongdoing. The NRC and the licensee engaged in alternative dispute resolution mediation that resulted in a confirmatory order. Additionally, the NRC issued notices of violation to two former licensed operators for their willful actions.

Falsified Annual Coordination with Local Authorities

An OI investigation substantiated allegations that the RSO at a licensee facility deliberately failed to coordinate with the local law enforcement (LLEA) and deliberately failed to document and maintain records of the annual LLEA coordination efforts. The RSO's actions caused the licensee to be in violation of regulatory requirements. This investigation stemmed from an NRC inspection, which identified inconsistencies in the licensee's documentation of and annual coordination with its LLEA. The results of this investigation remain under regulatory review by the NRC staff.

Failure to Comply with Safety Regulations

An OI investigation substantiated allegations that industrial radiographers failed to comply with NRC safety regulations while performing industrial radiography at a temporary job site under NRC jurisdiction. While allegations of wrongdoing concerning posting, zone control, and security barriers were not substantiated, the investigation found that one radiographer deliberately failed to maintain constant surveillance of a radiographic device containing approximately 30 curies of iridium-192 in an unrestricted area. The results of this investigation remain under regulatory review by the NRC staff.

8 FUTURE INITIATIVES

In 2025, OI continued to implement and fulfill prior future initiatives, including enhancing institutional knowledge of the nuclear industry, and engaging with a broader audience for hiring and retention efforts.

Looking to the future, OI's strategic plan will prioritize the key areas outlined below.

INTEGRITY ASSURANCE IN MODERNIZED LICENSING

In alignment with the Commission's and Administration's strategic objectives to streamline license reviews and reduce or eliminate unnecessary regulatory burdens, OI is strengthening its internal capabilities to react to a rapidly evolving regulatory environment. As part of this forward-looking initiative, OI will enhance its readiness to respond swiftly and effectively to allegations involving emerging technologies, particularly those introduced through the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024, specialized fuel cycles, and the integration of artificial intelligence into regulated activities.

While OI has consistently delivered timely and high-quality investigations, this initiative will deepen institutional expertise and reinforce coordination with partner offices. By proactively building investigative capacity and fostering cross-functional collaboration, OI will ensure that credible allegations of wrongdoing or criminal activity are addressed with urgency and thoroughness—supporting agile, risk-informed decisions that uphold public trust and regulatory integrity.

FOCUS ON NUCLEAR SAFETY AND ALLEGATIONS RESPONSE

OI will maintain its momentum in promptly identifying legitimate cases of whistleblower discrimination to support faster and more efficient enforcement actions. Ensuring that nuclear industry workers feel heard when raising safety concerns is essential to sustaining progress in a rapidly expanding and modernizing nuclear energy sector. As the nuclear industry evolves, OI's role in deterring criminal misconduct will become increasingly vital. To this end, continued diligence in responding to allegations of willful nuclear safety violations will be more critical than ever.

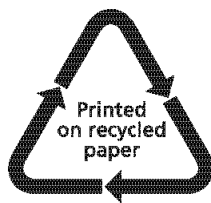
INVESTIGATIVE READINESS FOR EMERGING THREATS

As new nuclear technologies—such as small modular reactors—begin to come online and new licenses are issued, OI will take steps to ensure its investigative workforce and technical advisors are fully prepared to engage with these advances. By proactively educating its investigative force on these evolving systems, OI aims to build investigative readiness to support timely and effective responses to potential wrongdoing. This future initiative will help ensure that innovation in the nuclear sector is matched with strong oversight and continued public trust.

INCORPORATING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

A critical future action for OI involves the integration of artificial intelligence into ongoing investigative flow efforts, reflecting the agency's commitment to evolving alongside advances in the nuclear regulatory landscape. These tools will equip OI's investigative staff with unprecedented efficiencies in completing administrative processes and enhancing investigative products. Equally important is the planned adjustments of internal controls designed to ensure the excellence of OI's work products and support of the NRC's regulatory mission. OI reaffirms its commitment to never release any products without comprehensive human quality control processes.

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