



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

May 18, 2026

Gayle Elliott, Director  
Licensing and Regulatory Affairs  
Framatome Inc.  
3315 Old Forest Road  
Lynchburg, VA 24501

SUBJECT: THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION STAFF'S ACCEPTANCE OF TOPICAL REPORT, ANP-10359, REVISION 0, "PROTECT: INCORPORATION OF CHROMIUM-COATED M5 CLADDING MATERIAL PROPERTIES IN FRAMATOME PWR METHODS" (EPID L-2026-TOP-0015)

Dear Gayle Elliott:

By letter dated April 17, 2026 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Package Accession No. ML26107A264), Framatome Inc. (Framatome) submitted Topical Report (TR) ANP-10359, Revision 0, "PROtect: Incorporation of Chromium-Coated M5 Cladding Material Properties in Framatome PWR Methods," for U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's review and approval. As stated in your letter, Framatome has developed PROtect cladding in response to the industry effort to develop and introduce accident tolerant fuel (ATF) for use at increased exposure and increased enrichment above 5 weight percent. Framatome also requested that NRC complete its review of the TR within nine months (January 17, 2027) of its submittal. A pre-submittal meeting was held on June 24, 2025 (ML25174A381). The NRC staff has found that TR ANP-10359, Revision 0, contains sufficient information to begin its detailed technical safety review. The NRC staff planned schedule and estimated level of effort for the review are discussed below.

The schedule milestones and assumptions are provided in the enclosed Initial Review Schedule. Applying the NRC staff's Graded Estimate Method, the NRC staff estimates 778 hours (Approximately 20 percent reduction from historical averages) for this review. The NRC staff expects to complete its draft and final safety evaluation (SE) by December 10, 2026 (8 months from submittal), and March 5, 2027 (11 months from submittal) respectively. Time has been allocated in the schedule for the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) review, though the necessity of this review is subject to later determination by the Committee in accordance with its new guidance and best practices (ML26131A168). The schedule remains subject to revision pending the ACRS decision.

The schedule takes into consideration the NRC's current review priorities and available technical resources which may be subject to change. Any changes to the schedule and resources will be discussed with Framatome representatives. If there are emergent complexities or challenges in our review that would cause changes to the initial forecasted completion date of significant changes in the forecasted hours, the reasons for the changes, along with the new estimates, will be communicated during the routine interactions with the assigned project manager. The review schedule milestones and estimated review costs were discussed and agreed upon between Alan Meginnis and the NRC staff on May 15, 2026.

Section 170.21 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* requires that TRs are subject to fees based on the full cost of the review. Since you did not request a fee waiver, NRC staff hours will be billed accordingly.

If you have any questions regarding the TR review, please contact me at 301-415-6695 or via email at [Ngola.Otto@nrc.gov](mailto:Ngola.Otto@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,

***/RA/***

Ngola A. Otto, Project Manager  
Licensing Projects Branch  
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No.: 99902041

Enclosure:  
Initial Review Schedule

**Initial Review Schedule**

<b><u>Milestone</u></b>	<b><u>Planned Date</u></b>
Initial Submittal	April 17, 2026
Acceptance	May 21, 2026
NRC Staff Conduct Audit (In-person)	July 27-31, 2026
Issue Requests for Additional Information (RAIs) to Framatome	August 28, 2026
Framatome Response to RAIs	September 30, 2026
NRC Staff Issue Draft Safety Evaluation (SE)	December 10, 2026
Draft SE Proprietary Review by Framatome	December 21, 2026
Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards Subcommittee Meeting	February 2027
NRC Staff Issue Final SE to Framatome	March 5, 2027
-A (Approved Version) Issued by Framatome	April 9, 2027
NRC Staff Issued Verification	May 7, 2027

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Alan.Meginnis@Framatome.com

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