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June 11, 2026

MEMORANDUM TO: John R. Tappert, Director  
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

FROM: Christian J. Araguas, Director *Christian Araguas* Signed by Araguas, Christian  
Division of Engineering on 06/11/26  
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

SUBJECT: CLOSEOUT OF ACTION PLAN FOR ENHANCING THE  
AGENCY CODES AND STANDARDS PROGRAM FOR  
ADVANCED REACTORS

As the agency's Standards Executive, I am pleased to transmit the closeout of the "Action Plan for Enhancing U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Code and Standards Program for Advanced Reactors" ([ML24234A013](#)) and the integration of its associated improvements into the agency's broader codes and standards (C&S) program.

### Development of the Action Plan

The Action Plan documents staff-developed enhancements to the Codes and Standards (C&S) program following a public workshop on April 4, 2024. The workshop, co-hosted by NRC and the Idaho National Laboratory, was well attended, with more than 45 in-person participants and over 300 virtual participants. A meeting summary can be found at [ML24123A021](#).

The Action Plan is organized into three focus areas:

1. Improvements to the consensus standards development process,
2. Enhancements to NRC's endorsement processes, and
3. Leveraging commercial and non-nuclear consensus standards.

Each section is further subdivided into Swift Actions (to be completed within one year), Intermediate Activities (two to four years), and Program Enhancements (ongoing). In total, the Action Plan contains 17 items, with an equal distribution between Actions, Activities, and Enhancements across the three sections.

CONTACT: Curtis Lurvey, RES/DE/REB  
301-415-5973

Alec Neller, NRR/DANU/UTB2  
301-415-3704

The Action Plan was publicly released on August 22, 2024, and highlighted during the 2024 NRC Fall Standards Forum on September 25, 2024 ( [ML24298A246](#)). A Commission meeting was held on November 14, 2024, to provide detailed understanding of the Action Plan. On December 19, 2024, an intra-agency working group was established consisting of staff from RES, NMSS, NRR, and NSIR. These individuals serve as the NRC representatives to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the American Nuclear Society (ANS), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the American Concrete Institute (ACI), and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

This group made significant progress and delivered substantial accomplishments, as detailed in Enclosure 1, "Codes and Standards Action Plan Status Table." With the transmission of this memorandum, I am formally sunsetting the working group as their dedicated support for the Action Plan is no longer required.

### **Action Plan Accomplishments**

The Action Plan's primary accomplishments include the compilation of public and internal databases, the establishment of enhanced endorsement pathways, and the revision of Management Directive (MD) 6.5 to institutionalize these improvements. The staff has also strengthened public engagement efforts, including participation in the Advanced Reactor Codes and Standards Collaborative (ARCSC) and issuance of recurring letters to standards development organizations (SDOs) requesting information on their priority C&S initiatives. Additionally, the agency has reaffirmed the commitment to promoting risk-informed performance-based (RIPB) and technology-inclusive C&S where practicable.

#### **1. Consensus Standards Development Process Improvements**

The staff created two databases, one internal and one public, to address Action Plan items 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, and 3.2. These databases are intended to inform stakeholders about our ongoing priority C&S activities and to identify NRC staff participating in those activities. The databases incorporated input from the intra-agency working group and SDO coordinators, who provided information on the codes and standards under development, NRC priority, anticipated completion dates, endorsement mechanisms, and consideration of RIPB principles. Priorities were informed by correspondence with ARSCS, ASME, IEEE, and ANS. The databases have already proven valuable by identifying where additional engagement is needed.

Action Plan items 1.4 and 1.5 focused on enhancing public engagement in C&S development. The NRC Standards Forum continues to play a central role in this effort, and the letters issued to SDOs to better understand their priorities have now become a recurring engagement. The NRC also hosts periodic meetings between the SDOs and the Standards Executive to discuss ongoing activities and emergent issues.

#### **2. NRC's Endorsement Enhancements**

Under Action Plan item 2.1, the NRC revised Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.87, which endorses ASME Boiler Pressure Vessel Code, Section III, Division 5 for the construction of high temperature reactors, to incorporate updates to the ASME code. The draft guide, DG-1436, was

issued in December of 2024 ([ML24275A266](#)), and the final RG was issued in August of 2025 ([ML25176A084](#)).

To accomplish Action Plan item 2.2, the working group developed enhancements to the endorsement process, including a three-tiered RG issuance approach.

- A traditional RG process for C&S is associated with rulemaking or potential endorsements expected to generate significant public interest.
- A direct final RG process with a 30-day post-promulgation period for C&S expected to receive limited comment.
- A direct final RG process with no comment period for code cases where public comment is not anticipated.

To institutionalize these changes, the working group revised Management Directive (MD) 6.5, fulfilling Action Plan item 2.3. The revisions clarify staff roles and responsibilities and voting expectations and incorporate new endorsement pathways. The revised MD is under inter-office concurrence and legal review and expected to be issued before September 2026.

### **3. Leveraging Commercial/Non-Nuclear Consensus Standards and Other Efforts**

The Action Plan also directed the staff to enhance participation, tracking, and endorsement of commercial/non-nuclear C&S. The staff continue to participate in high-priority non-nuclear standards activities. These activities are included in the C&S databases. Prior to pursuing formal endorsements of non-nuclear C&S, the staff intend to further assess industry needs to ensure efficient use of staff resources.

The Action Plan also required increased public engagement, particularly for non-nuclear C&S under Action Plan items 3.1, 3.3, 3.7. Item 3.1 was completed through letters to SDOs seeking input on areas where the NRC participation in non-nuclear standards would be beneficial. Item 3.3 was completed with a public meeting on accelerated material qualification ([ML25155B256](#)) and the 2025 annual NRC Standards Forum. The Standards Forum for 2025 was divided into two parts, one in September ([ML26075A040](#)) and one in January ([ML26063A560](#)), both of which discussed use of commercial standards. Item 3.7 is ongoing with the staff participation in the Advanced Reactor Codes and Standards Collaborative, including staff presentation at an ARCSC meeting ([ML25342A031](#)) to communicate the agency's perspective.

### **Next Steps**

The remaining ongoing action items and program enhancements will be integrated into the agency's C&S program. Although the Action Plan focused primarily on advanced reactors, this transition provides an opportunity to fully leverage the Action Plan accomplishments to ensure meeting the needs of operating reactors, research reactors, fuel fabrication facilities, and other regulated nuclear facilities. Thus, the agency will remain well-prepared to support the current and future C&S needs for the safe and efficient operation of nuclear facilities.

J. Tappert

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