



NRC NEWS

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EO14300 Rulemaking

NRC Modernizes Reactor Licensing Hearings, Moves Public Input Earlier in Process

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is [changing](#) when and how it conducts mandatory hearings in reactor licensing reviews, moving them to the beginning of the licensing process and refocusing them on public engagement and information exchange. The revised policy implements requirements of Executive Order 14300 and the ADVANCE Act and represents a significant modernization of a hearing process that has traditionally occurred near the end of reactor licensing reviews.

“The new approach to mandatory hearings provides meaningful opportunities for public engagement and information sharing,” NRC Chairman Ho K. Nieh said. “By holding them earlier in the review process, we can give the public greater visibility into licensing decisions while improving the effectiveness of the process.”

The Atomic Energy Act requires mandatory hearings (or “uncontested” hearings) as part of the licensing process for new reactors. Under the revised policy, those hearings will now occur during the early stages of a review, when public input and agency discussions can be most informative. Historically, mandatory hearings often took place near the end of a review after much of the agency’s technical work had already been completed.

The policy applies immediately to reactor applications already under review and those filed in the future. The agency’s “contested” hearing process, which allows formal legal challenges to license applications, is unchanged and remains in place.

Separately, the NRC has finalized a [rule](#) to increase flexibility in conducting mandatory hearings. The rule removes certain hearing requirements not mandated by the AEA and clarifies that references to hearings in the Commission’s regulations apply to contested hearings, not uncontested mandatory hearings. The rule took effect in April.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission was created as an expert, technical agency to protect public health, safety, and security, and regulate the civilian use of nuclear materials, including enabling the deployment of nuclear power for the benefit of society. Among other responsibilities, the agency issues licenses, conducts inspections, initiates and enforces regulations, and plans for incident response. The NRC is collaborating with interagency partners to implement reforms outlined in new Executive Orders and the ADVANCE Act to streamline agency activities and enhance efficiency.