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EO14300 Rulemaking

NRC Proposes Most Comprehensive Modernization of Reactor Licensing in Decades

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today proposed a sweeping package of regulatory reforms aimed at modernizing reactor licensing, safety oversight, and siting practices for nuclear power plants. The proposed rule would update requirements across virtually every stage of a plant's lifecycle—from initial design approvals and construction through operation, license renewal, and decommissioning—by introducing more flexible, risk-informed, and performance-based approaches tailored to both today's technologies and the next generation of reactors.

The proposal, which spans numerous regulatory areas, represents the NRC's most comprehensive update to nuclear power plant licensing in decades. It is informed by decades of operating experience, lessons learned from new reactor licensing, and the emergence of advanced reactor designs that challenge the boundaries of existing regulations. The rulemaking also advances the regulatory modernization objectives of the ADVANCE Act of 2024 and Executive Order 14300.

"NRC's regulations have not kept pace with new technologies and our energy needs," Chairman Ho Nieh said. "This proposed rule strips out rigid frameworks and unnecessary conservatism to accelerate the safe deployment of new reactors and expand existing capacity across America."

Among the specific proposed changes:

- **Faster, More Efficient Construction**: The proposal would streamline the start of construction for new reactors by focusing NRC oversight on the most safety-significant systems and allowing certain early site activities under a general license, once an application is docketed.
- **Flexible, Risk-Informed Regulatory Options**: Applicants and licensees would have new opportunities to use modern, risk-informed approaches as alternatives to traditional requirements, including for safety analyses and model updates.
- **Modernized Emergency Preparedness**: The rule would make performance-based emergency planning available to all reactor types and allow for more flexible, risk-informed emergency planning zones tailored to each facility's design.
- **Updated Quality Assurance Standards**: Licensees could opt for a new, internationally aligned quality assurance framework, supporting innovation and a more flexible supply chain.

- **Greater Licensing and Siting Flexibility**: The proposal would extend license renewal terms, update siting criteria to accommodate a broader range of technologies, and allow more tailored decommissioning funding requirements for advanced reactors.
- **Supporting Advanced Fuels**: The proposal would enable the safe use of innovative fuels, such as higher-enriched and accident-tolerant designs, and modernize safety requirements to focus on credible, risk-significant scenarios.

The NRC will accept comments on the proposed rule for 45 days following its publication in the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted at www.regulations.gov under Docket ID NRC-2025-0975. Additional details will be provided in the Federal Register notice.

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.