

May 14, 2003

MEMORANDUM TO: Chairman Diaz  
Commissioner Dicus  
Commissioner McGaffigan  
Commissioner Merrifield

FROM: William D. Travers */RA/*  
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: ENTOMBMENT RESEARCH FOR POWER REACTORS

The staff in SECY-02-0191, "Status of the Entombment Option for Power Reactors," dated October 25, 2002, informed the Commission that it planned to defer rulemaking to permit entombment as a decommissioning option for power reactors until completion of research studies on entombment viability issues.

In a Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) dated November 26, 2002, the Commission directed the staff to provide a plan for the completion of research deemed necessary before rulemaking on entombment can start. The SRM asked for an itemization of specific tasks, milestones, schedules, and resources required for the completion of the research.

In response to the SRM, the staff has prepared the attached plan, "Research to Support Entombment Rulemaking." The plan describes an ongoing project related to entombment and other research yet to be initiated. For the ongoing project, the plan provides the specific tasks, milestones, schedules, and resources. For the newly identified research needs that are not currently addressed in the budget, the plan provides cursory descriptions of the tasks, expected time frames, and preliminary estimates of costs. A more detailed discussion of this work is not possible at this time because statements of work (SOWs) and detailed cost estimates have not yet been developed.

The staff noted in SECY-02-0191 that it would be prudent to defer rulemaking on entombment until the technical basis is established. The schedule provided in the attached plan is based on utilization of contractor expertise that is currently under contract at the National Institute of Standards and Technology and where, through prior work, specific expertise has been developed in this area. However, some of this expertise has been diverted to high priority work for the Department of Homeland Security on evaluation of the World Trade Center collapse. The staff plans to issue a solicitation of interest to determine if suitable expertise can be acquired through another source. This may provide an opportunity to expedite the rulemaking schedule. This solicitation will take about four months to complete, after which time the staff will determine the technical, schedule, and resource implications of attempting to accelerate this work.

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The schedule for completing the ongoing work and the tentative schedule for new work (which has not yet been placed with appropriate contractors) would allow rule development to begin in 2005. Work scheduled for completion in subsequent years (through 2008) is not necessary for rule development but will be needed to support staff evaluations of licensee submittals to assess compliance with the rule.

Resources - Work described as "Research in Progress" is included in the current FY 2003 budget and the proposed FY 2004 budget. Initiation of the work described in "Planned Research Activities" will be addressed within the add/shed process and FY 2004-2005 PBPM. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this paper for resource implications and has no objections.

Attachment: RESEARCH TO SUPPORT ENTOMBMENT RULEMAKING

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