



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

No. 05-162

December 2, 2005

NRC ACCEPTS GENERAL ELECTRIC'S APPLICATION FOR ESBWR ADVANCED REACTOR DESIGN CERTIFICATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has accepted an application from the General Electric Company to certify the Economic Simplified Boiling Water Reactor (ESBWR) advanced nuclear power plant design, after determining the application has sufficient information to be formally "docketed" and reviewed.

The ESBWR is a nuclear power plant capable of producing approximately 1,550 megawatts of electricity. The plant features enhanced safety systems that rely on gravity and natural processes to safely shut down the reactor or mitigate the effects of an accident. It is designed for a 60-year operating life.

"Our staff has enough information to start an evaluation of the entire design," said David Matthews, Director of the New Reactor Licensing Division in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "We'll ask GE for more details on the ESBWR, as needed, while the review goes forward."

If certification is granted, a company that wishes to build and operate a new nuclear power plant could choose to use the design and reference it in a license application. Safety issues resolved within the scope of the design certification are not subject to litigation with respect to an individual license application. Site-specific design information and environmental impacts associated with building and operating the plant at a particular location could be litigated. The NRC has certified three other standard reactor designs and is considering certification of a fourth later this year.

General Electric submitted its application Aug. 25 and provided supplemental information several times in September and October. The application (docket number 52-010) is available both in a *Federal Register* notice to be published shortly and on the NRC Web site at this address: <http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/new-licensing/design-cert/esbwr.html>.

During the staff's review of the ESBWR, they will continue to request additional information, if necessary, to properly analyze the design, and then issue an initial Safety Evaluation Report, which would identify remaining technical and safety questions to be resolved. A supplemental Safety

Evaluation Report will be issued when all technical and safety issues with the design have been resolved.

Once the design has passed staff review it can then be certified through NRC's rulemaking process, which is open to public participation. The certification process is described in Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 52, Subpart B. The design certification process normally lasts between 42 and 60 months.

###