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NRC Approves Measures to Reposition Agency for the Future

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved several measures to improve efficiency and meet the challenges of an evolving work load while maintaining its ability to protect public health and safety.

In a [Staff Requirements Memorandum \(SRM\)](#) issued today, the Commission accepted many of the recommendations presented by the staff's Project Aim 2020 report, which was provided to the Commission in February. The Project Aim report recommended 17 strategies related to planning, processes and the workforce to "re-baseline" the agency and prepare it for the future. The report concluded the NRC needs to right-size while retaining appropriate skill sets to accomplish its mission and streamline processes to use resources more wisely and improve timeliness of regulatory decision making. The report's strategies also addressed the agency's need to be able to respond quickly to changing industry and workload conditions in the future.

"I am pleased that the NRC is now moving forward with a set of sound, common-sense steps. The time has come for the agency to take stock of itself," Chairman Stephen G. Burns said. "The measures the agency will be implementing through Project AIM will better prepare us to meet the challenges of 2020 and beyond, while ensuring we have the right staff in the right places to accomplish our critical mission."

In its SRM, the Commission directed the staff to review the agency workload, which has evolved over the past decade, and develop a list of tasks that could be shed as no longer needed or justified, or able to be performed at a reduced level. The goal of this "re-baselining" is to make the NRC more efficient. The Commission also approved a staffing target of 3,600 employees ("full-time equivalents") by Sept. 30, 2016, but deferred setting a 2020 target until after the re-baselining review is completed. For fiscal year 2015, the NRC budgeted for 3,778 employees, including the Office of the Inspector General.

Commissioners directed the staff to develop a plan within a year to merge the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and the Office of New Reactors – with the caveat that any merger would be subject to Commission approval. The Commission specified that the merger plan should include a business case justifying the consolidation, and said the timing should not impact ongoing and projected work.

In its direction to staff, the Commission also supported improving the licensing process to enhance the predictability and efficiency of reviews while maintaining their effectiveness and quality. In addition, agency leaders were told to continue to improve the transparency of how NRC fees are

calculated and the timeliness of communicating fee changes. Further, Commissioners directed the staff to look at the possibility of further consolidating the materials programs within the regions.

The Project Aim report was developed by a small team of staff experts, senior staff and managers who sought input from stakeholders, other federal agencies, the National Academy of Public Administration, and Chapter 208 of the National Treasury Employees Union. The report's analysis was also based on interviews with senior NRC managers and 23 focus groups of staff members. The team received more than 2,000 suggestions, strategies and observations for use in formulating its report.