



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

November 13, 2019

The Honorable Mike Braun
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air
and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am pleased to submit the "Semiannual Status Report on the Licensing Activities and Regulatory Duties of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission." The enclosed report covers NRC activities from April through September 2019, and includes a list of rulemaking activities, their priority and schedule, and actions taken to adhere to the backfit rule, as directed in the Joint Explanatory Statement that accompanied the Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019.

During this reporting period, the NRC had three subsequent license renewal applications under review for a total of six power reactor units. There were no first-time license renewal applications under review during this reporting period. The NRC also continued to address safety enhancements in response to the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors in Japan.

In addition, the NRC continued to implement the requirements of the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act of 2017 (NEICA) and the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act (NEIMA). The NRC and the U.S. Department of Energy recently entered into a memorandum of understanding to implement provisions of NEICA relating to sharing technical expertise and knowledge on advanced nuclear reactor technologies and nuclear energy innovation. Under NEIMA, the agency submitted three required reports to Congress on advanced reactor topics and lessons learned related to emergency planning and evacuations. To implement Section 108 of NEIMA, the agency held 11 public meetings across the United States to identify best practices for local community advisory boards associated with decommissioning nuclear power plants. The NRC staff also published a questionnaire to gather additional public input. The NRC will submit a report to Congress by July 2020 describing the results of these efforts.

Other Noteworthy Activities in the Past 6 Months

On June 7, 2019, the NRC announced the publication of its annual report to Congress for fiscal year (FY) 2018 on abnormal occurrences, which are defined as unscheduled incidents or events that the agency determines to be significant from the standpoint of public health and safety. Of the 11 events reported, 9 were medical events. Of the other two events, one event

occurred during radiography operations, and the other event involved a stolen radiography camera (which was later recovered). No events at commercial nuclear power plants met the abnormal occurrence criteria.

In July 2019, the NRC publicly issued an unclassified version of its 2018 report to Congress on the agency's security inspection program. Last year, the NRC conducted 192 security inspections at commercial nuclear power plants and Category I fuel cycle facilities. Those included 21 force-on-force inspections involving simulated attacks on the facilities to test the effectiveness of licensees' physical protection programs. When NRC inspectors identify a security finding during an inspection, they ensure that the licensee implements appropriate compensatory measures to correct the situation, if the licensee has not already done so.

On August 15, 2019, the NRC and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) signed a memorandum of cooperation for both agencies to increase regulatory effectiveness through collaborative work on the technical reviews of advanced reactor and small modular reactor technologies. Working under the previously established steering committee, the NRC and the CNSC immediately began developing the infrastructure needed to share and evaluate cooperative opportunities and best practices in the analysis of advanced reactor and small modular reactor designs. The memorandum of cooperation is the first of its kind between the U.S. and Canadian regulators on matters involving nuclear power development.

In early September 2019, the NRC announced the award of 45 grants to 33 academic institutions in 19 States and Puerto Rico, totaling \$15 million. Recipients included 4-year universities and colleges, 2-year trade schools and community colleges, and minority serving institutions. More than 5,200 students in 35 States and Puerto Rico have received funds through the NRC program over the past 10 years. The NRC has also funded multiple research and development, educational and training, and experiential learning projects through this program to enhance academic excellence and produce a skilled future workforce.

In mid-September 2019, the NRC held its annual conference on spent nuclear fuel management to engage publicly with interested stakeholders on the latest developments and future plans in the area of spent nuclear management. Topics of discussion included spent fuel licensing, aging management, extended storage, transportation, inspections, and operating experience.

Effective September 30, 2019, Vermont became the 39th NRC Agreement State, following signature of an agreement by NRC Chairman Svinicki and Vermont Governor Scott. Under this agreement, Vermont assumes responsibility for licensing, rulemaking, inspection, and enforcement activities related to industrial, medical, and academic uses of certain radioactive materials. Thirty-six licenses have been transferred to Vermont's jurisdiction.

Other significant activities during this reporting period included, the publication in May of the final rule amending NRC regulations for licensing, inspection, special project, and annual fees that the agency will charge applicants and licensees for FY 2019. In July, the NRC also requested public comment on a draft regulatory basis for potential new regulations governing the near-surface disposal of certain low-level radioactive waste. In August, the Commission conducted a mandatory hearing on Tennessee Valley Authority's application for an early site permit for one or more small modular reactors at the Clinch River site in Tennessee. In September, the NRC's direct final rule, certifying Korea Electric Power Corporation and Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Company, Ltd.'s Advanced Power Reactor 1400 standard design as fully acceptable for use in the U.S. domestic energy market, became effective.

Finally, from April 2019 through September 2019, the agency conducted almost 500 public meetings in the Washington, DC, area and in States and communities with NRC-licensed or proposed facilities to address a full range of NRC issues. Also, during this time, the NRC received 187 Freedom of Information Act requests and closed 204 such requests.

Please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Eugene Dacus, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776, if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Svinicki', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Kristine L. Svinicki

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable Mike Braun
Chairman, Subcommittee on Clean Air
and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman, Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Senator Thomas R. Carper

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on Energy
and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative Greg Walden

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment
and Climate Change
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative John Shimkus

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative Mike Simpson

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein

The Honorable Bobby L. Rush
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
cc: Representative Fred Upton