

Meeting of the International Nuclear Regulators Association

Input for Item 6: Communications -- Talking Points

- The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) views nuclear regulation as the public's business, and as such, identifies openness in its regulatory process as an explicit goal of the Agency. The Commission is preparing to release its recently revised Strategic Plan which establishes "ensuring openness" as one of the agency's long-term strategic objectives.
- The NRC recognizes that it must inform the public about the regulatory process, and offer a reasonable opportunity for meaningful participation in that process.
- Over the past several years, the NRC has been examining ways to enhance public involvement and foster confidence in the NRC's actions as an effective and independent regulator.
- The NRC continues to seek and to expand opportunities for public access to process and risk information that is clear and understandable.
- Communications activities and recent improvements to NRC's program include:
 - NRC staff represents the U.S. in the OECD/NEA "Forum on Stakeholder Confidence", and serves on its core group .
 - NRC established a high-level agency task force to develop strategies for comprehensive and effective communications with external stakeholders. Task force was chartered by Chairman Diaz and led by Commissioner Merrifield. Task force report was issued August 7, 2003
 - Chairman Diaz established a new position, NRC Director of Communication, to provide integrated agency leadership and direction for external communications.
 - For several years, the NRC staff has developed and implemented communications plans for all high priority agency activities.
 - Public meeting preparation and training is made available to NRC staff through the NRC's training center.
 - Individual program offices have implemented major changes to the way in which technical staff prepare for speaking with general audiences. They have employed new formats and used professional facilitators in public meetings. NRC staff continue to develop plain language handout and display materials to explain NRC regulatory programs more clearly. These and other institutional changes have been applied successfully in many public meetings on high-profile topics.

- NRC recently published NUREG/BR-0308, “Effective Risk Communications: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s Guidelines for External Risk Communication” to provide NRC staff and management with practical, easy-to-use guidance on how to improve interactions with external stakeholders on risk related matters.
 - NUREG/CR-6840, “The Technical Basis for the NRC’s Guidelines for External Risk Communication” compares the NRC’s risk communication needs to the state-of-the art in risk communication practices. It presents data collected during development of the Risk Communication Guidelines and recommends how the NRC can best incorporate risk communication principles throughout the agency.
 - The NRC staff is improving public outreach by holding a larger fraction of its public meetings near potential or currently licensed facilities instead of at NRC headquarters or regional offices. Meetings about reactor license renewal, consideration of early reactor site permits, and oversight of a potential repository at Yucca Mountain are examples of public meetings that NRC conducts routinely in or near the affected communities.
 - The NRC established a Communications Council to plan, coordinate, and implement NRC internal communications strategies, and share best practices that add value across the agency. The Council is primarily focused on internal communication issues, however there may be instances where external communication activities or policies are affected by decisions made internally.
- What’s next in risk communication?
 - NRC is also developing internal risk communication guidelines. These guidelines are intended to improve communications by providing inspectors, risk analysts, and other staff with practical advice on documenting and communicating risk analysis and risk insight information within NRC.
 - NRC is developing additional training on risk communication to provide NRC staff with an interactive forum for practicing and reinforcing risk communication principles for both external and internal communication.
 - NRC staff continue to pursue innovative techniques for communicating more effectively with the public it serves.