



NRC NEWS

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NRC MOVING FORWARD ON RISK-INFORMED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Last year, NRC Commissioner George Apostolakis led a Risk Management Task Force (RMTF), at the request of Chairman Gregory B. Jaczko, to develop a strategic vision and options for adopting a more comprehensive, holistic, risk-informed, performance-based regulatory approach for nuclear reactors, materials, waste, fuel cycle, and transportation. On Thursday, Chairman Jaczko directed the agency's staff to evaluate the RMTF's [report](#) and to provide recommendations to the Commission next year on whether modifications to the regulatory framework should be made. Jaczko noted that the report could help improve regulatory consistency across the NRC's various programs.

"While the efforts of the Risk Management Task Force started before the accident at Fukushima, there is a clear nexus between the results of their report and the first finding of our Japan Near-Term Task Force which noted that over the years NRC regulations have been developed in a patchwork manner. Looking down the road it is important to address this issue," Jaczko said. "I want to thank Commissioner Apostolakis and his team of experts for producing an in-depth examination of our regulatory framework that helps point us towards a better approach."

"We set out to look at how the agency should be regulating 10 to 15 years from now," Apostolakis said. "We concluded that while today's 'defense-in-depth' concept has served us well and remains valuable, it's used unevenly and more guidance is needed on how much defense-in-depth is sufficient. The report's recommendations seek to change that."

The RMTF proposed that the agency incorporate risk-informed and performance-based approaches into its regulation and oversight and that a Commission policy statement be developed on the issue, after obtaining stakeholder input. Chairman Jaczko's directions to the staff include reviewing the RMTF report and providing recommendations to the Commission for consideration, including incorporation of the proposed concepts into important agencywide policy documents, such as the Strategic Plan.

The RMTF report noted that using the term risk management "explicitly recognizes that adequate protection of public health and safety is not synonymous with absolute safety and that the NRC's role is to ensure that risks from the use of nuclear materials are well managed (and) establishing a common language of risk management across all NRC activities is consistent with the principles of good regulation."

One of the many RMTF findings was that while the concept of design-basis events and design-basis accidents continues to be a sound licensing approach, this set of events and accidents has not been updated to reflect insights from power reactor operating history and more modern methods, such as probabilistic risk assessment (PRA).

The RMTF report also suggested that the agency use rulemaking to create a “design-enhancement” category for regulatory treatment of beyond design-basis accidents. The report said the agency should reassess methods used to estimate the frequency and magnitude of external hazards and implement a consistent process that includes both deterministic and PRA methods.

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