



# NRC NEWS

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## **NRC CHAIRMAN SAYS SAFETY CULTURE CRITICAL TO IMPROVING SAFETY; NOTES FUKUSHIMA PROGRESS IN UNITED STATES**

VIENNA -- U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Allison Macfarlane Monday said safety culture is among the key lessons of the Fukushima tragedy and told international regulators the United States is beginning the process of transitioning implementation of its post-Fukushima efforts into the daily routine of reactor regulation.

Speaking in Austria to the International Nuclear Safety Group Forum at the start of the International Atomic Energy Agency's annual General Conference, Macfarlane also said it is important to avoid focusing on planning for a single type of accident. "We must remember that natural hazards come in many forms... We should not focus on planning for the next 'expected' accident but rather have measures in place to address a variety of permutations. Our focus on external events must continue to be broad to make nuclear reactors worldwide as safe as possible," she said.

Among the lessons to draw from Fukushima is the importance of "safety culture," she said. "I commend the courage of our Japanese colleagues in demonstrating self-reflection and transparency so that all nations can benefit from their experiences." Lessons learned must be shared," she said in remarks prepared for delivery ([Chairman Macfarlane's remarks](#)).

A strong safety culture is only part of the issue, Macfarlane said in her first international meeting. "It is critically important for all countries to have strong inspection and enforcement programs with transparent processes and objective criteria. Workers in the nuclear industry need a questioning attitude and an environment in which they feel free to raise concerns." She noted the "whistleblower" protections available in the United States, and added that even with all the protections in place in the United States for raising safety concerns "safety culture is still a challenge for the United States to promote and assess."

Macfarlane, a geologist and academic before becoming the NRC Chairman in early July, reviewed the post-Fukushima steps being taken in the United States – with upgrades prioritized in terms of their safety benefit.

First, she said, there was a task force to develop recommendations, and then a special office to implement the ensuing recommendations. The NRC is now beginning to transition responsibility for implementation of the lessons learned to the offices dealing with reactors.

“Far from minimizing these activities’ importance, this will ensure that the lessons we have learned are fully integrated into our regulatory work. We believe that by weaving the lessons learned from Fukushima into nearly all of our regulatory activities, we are ensuring their long-term sustainability, encourage our international colleagues to do the same,” she added.

During the course of the IAEA General Convention Macfarlane will meet with approximately 20 national regulators and sign a number of bilateral cooperation agreements that contribute to sharing global nuclear safety expertise. Among the nations signing agreements with the United States will be Mexico, Switzerland, Jordan, Korea and Turkey.

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