



NRC NEWS

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CHAIRMAN DIAZ CONTINUES FOCUS ON NUCLEAR SECURITY

Dr. Nils J. Diaz, Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, will be emphasizing the completion of additional milestones in enhancing security requirements for nuclear power plants and for the handling of high-risk radioactive sources in the post-9/11 environment.

Dr. Diaz believes that the NRC staff has done a tremendous job in helping the Commission make needed post-9/11 changes, most of which are now underway. Chairman Diaz states, "Our nuclear facilities were the best protected in the civilian infrastructure before 9/11. Under former Chairman Meserve, and with the complete support of my fellow Commissioners, the NRC has made numerous further improvements to insure these facilities remain secure. We are nearing the end of ordering needed improvements for nuclear power plants and have insured that interim measures are in place for all other significant nuclear facilities. We have also laid in place the foundation on which we will build cradle-to-grave controls of high-risk radioactive sources. I intend to see all these initiatives through to completion."

Dr. Diaz, designated by President Bush as NRC Chairman on April 1, noted that Orders will soon be issued to enhance training and address security force fatigue. He expects the Commission to revise the design basis threats for operating nuclear power plants and category 1 fuel cycle facilities later this month. Force-on-force security exercises have begun at a pace of approximately two per month. Access authorization requirements for power reactors were previously tightened. He said, "With the completion of the revised design basis threats, we expect that there will be a period of regulatory stability during which our power reactor licensees can consolidate the various enhancements that we have ordered. But we intend to continue to work with the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal agencies, as well as State and local law enforcement and emergency planning officials, to

insure an overall integrated approach to the security of these critical facilities. At each step over the past 17 months we have done what needed to be done to secure these facilities, but, as we learn more, I am confident that the NRC, the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies will do whatever it takes to protect the people of this country.”

In order to help complete the remaining security initiatives and ensure their timely implementation, Dr. Diaz has reorganized the Office of the Chairman. The reorganization is intended to heighten the focus of security, while continuing traditional attention on reactor, materials and waste safety programs. The reorganization will also increase the Chairman’s ability to handle current and emerging issues.

The reorganization involves the establishment of an Executive Assistant for Materials and Security, who will focus on security matters, including the establishment of cradle-to-grave controls on high-risk sources, and on materials safety issues, and an Executive Assistant for Reactors and Research, who will help push forward the various initiatives underway to complete security analyses and risk-inform reactor regulations.

Dr. Diaz said that he intends to pursue his long-held interest in enhancing the safety of commercial nuclear power plants using the safety insights which have been derived from probabilistic safety analyses. He said, “The Commission recently gave the staff direction on two critical safety improvement initiatives. I intend to see these rulemakings progress as rapidly as possible during my tenure as Chairman.”

Finally, Chairman Diaz emphasized that he intends to reach out to both the public and the Congress to explain agency decisions and actions. “I will make every effort to meet with a broad array of stakeholders. Open communication is critical to the success of the Commission,” he said.

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