



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN GREGORY B. JACZKO AT COMMISSION BRIEFING ON URANIUM RECOVERY REGULATION

Good morning. We will be focusing on the licensing review of new uranium recovery facilities during today's Commission meeting.

We need look no further than this country's experience with uranium mining and milling activities in the early years of nuclear power to appreciate the importance of regulatory oversight on these issues. Many of those sites are dealing with significant environmental challenges – notably groundwater contamination – that may take years, or even decades, to resolve.

It is this area in particular that puts environmental protection in the agency's mission. Regulation of uranium recovery facilities is an important part of our effort to protect public health and safety – and the environment.

Today, the increased price for uranium has spurred a lot more interest in new uranium recovery facilities and restarting existing ones.

We're in the process of strengthening our licensing and oversight programs, and have taken approaches that we think will be efficient and effective. The development of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement is one example of that. This kind of pro-active planning helps us make the best use of our resources, and is critical to our effectiveness as a regulator.

But, in the end, public health and safety and environmental protection are our mandate.

The Commission will hear from three panels this morning. The NRC staff will get us started by briefing the Commission on several issues, including the status of new applications. During our second panel, officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Land Management will discuss the status of their related activities. Lastly, the Commission will hear from a diverse panel of stakeholders, which includes state government regulators and advocacy representatives.

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