

# U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

## DIRECTIVE TRANSMITTAL

TN: DT-99-17

To: NRC Management Directives Custodians

Subject: Transmittal of Management Directive 5.5, "Public Affairs Program"

Purpose: Directive and Handbook 5.5 have been revised to include NRC's policy from the strategic plan with regard to public affairs and to provide a handbook that describes the process for preparing and issuing news releases. Two authorities were added: those of the Chairman and EDO.

Office and  
Division of Origin: Office of Public Affairs

Contact: Beth Hayden, 415-8200

Date Approved: December 13, 1991 (**Revised: June 25, 1999**)

Volume: 5 Governmental Relations and Public Affairs

Directive: 5.5 Public Affairs Program

Availability: Rules and Directives Branch  
Office of Administration  
Michael T. Lesar, (301) 415-7163  
Christy Moore, (301) 415-7086

# Public Affairs Program

---

Directive

5.5

---

## Contents

Policy .....	1
Objectives .....	1
Organizational Responsibilities and	
Delegations of Authority .....	2
Chairman .....	2
Executive Director for Operations (EDO) .....	2
Director, Office of Public Affairs (OPA) .....	2
Directors of Offices and Divisions .....	4
Definition .....	5
Applicability .....	5
Handbook .....	5



# U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Volume: 5 Governmental Relations and Public Affairs

OPA

## Public Affairs Program

### Directive 5.5

#### Policy

(5.5-01)

It is the policy of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to conduct its business publicly and candidly and keep the public apprised of regulatory actions. NRC recognizes that the public has a right to know what the agency is doing to protect public health and safety and why.

#### Objectives

(5.5-02)

- To make available to the public through the news media and other channels of communication complete and accurate information on NRC activities to assist the public in making informed judgments regarding agency activities. (021)
- To keep NRC management advised of public interest in proposed policies, programs, and projects so that public affairs actions may be planned, evaluated, and executed effectively. (022)

## Organizational Responsibilities and Delegations of Authority (5.5-03)

### Chairman (031)

As NRC's official spokesperson, makes the final decision on news releases, when necessary, consistent with Commission decision and policy.

### Executive Director for Operations (EDO) (032)

- Reviews and signs staff papers (i.e., SECY papers), concurring in any draft news releases that may be in these papers, and forwards these papers to the Commission for review and approval. Notifies the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) of any changes to news releases. (a)
- Informs OPA of significant staff actions that may merit news releases. (b)

### Director, Office of Public Affairs (OPA) (033)

- Develops and administers agencywide policies and programs for disseminating information to the public and the news media concerning NRC policies, programs, and activities; informs senior NRC management of media coverage of interest to the agency. (a)
- Provides to the Chairman, Commission, Executive Director for Operations, and senior management— (b)
  - Early advice on public affairs strategies to deal effectively with the public on issues of interest (i)

Organizational Responsibilities and  
Delegations of Authority  
(5.5-03) (continued)

Director, Office of Public Affairs (OPA)  
(033) (continued)

- Information on external activities that might affect NRC interests (ii)
- Recommends to the Chairman, Commission, and Executive Director for Operations requirements for public statements, including their substance, timing, and method of delivery, except those statements prepared and delivered pursuant to the legislative process. (c)
- Provides advice and assistance to other Government agencies in matters concerning the preparation and dissemination of public information relating to or affecting NRC programs or policies. (d)
- Provides speakers, furnishes publications, and renders any other assistance in response to requests from the public, and conducts workshops and seminars for members of the media and educational institutions. (e)
- Arranges interviews of the Chairman, Commissioners, Executive Director for Operations, and other key managers with reporters, as needed. (f)
- Reviews, and is consulted on, any decision by offices and divisions to deny requests from the news media for information. (g)
- Issues all NRC news releases and posts them to NRC's external Web site on the Internet; maintains NRC news releases, speeches, and other NRC documents of public and media interest on NRC's external Web site. (h)

Organizational Responsibilities and  
Delegations of Authority  
(5.5-03) (continued)

Director, Office of Public Affairs (OPA)  
(033) (continued)

- Plans, directs, and coordinates the activities of public affairs officers (PAOs) located at NRC regional offices. [These field PAOs are employees of OPA.] (i)

Directors of Offices and Divisions  
(034)

- Coordinate with the Director, OPA: (a)
  - Proposed news releases and other public information documents and actions (i)
  - Proposed Commission decision papers (i.e., SECY papers) as necessary for evaluation of the need for news releases or other public affairs actions (ii)
  - News media inquiries for nonroutine information and those that require coordination outside the receiving office or division (iii)
  - Text of proposed public statements (e.g., speeches, magazine articles, radio and television programs, discussion panel material) involving nonroutine NRC program information, new program information, or new policy interpretations (iv)
- Advise the Director, OPA, of communications between NRC and other organizations or individuals that are likely to have public information implications. (b)

## Organizational Responsibilities and Delegations of Authority

(5.5-03) (continued)

### Directors of Offices and Divisions

(034) (continued)

- Provide prompt information and assistance to the Director, OPA, in preparing and releasing statements on accidents and incidents. (c)
- Determine the appropriate level of office review of draft news releases for accuracy and completeness of information. (d)

### Definitions

(5.5-04)

**Nonroutine information.** Refers in general to all proposed statements, documents, and answers to inquiries except those covering matters of local interest and those limited to material that has been previously released. In essence, the interpretation of nonroutine is a matter of judgment and common sense.

### Applicability

(5.5-05)

The policy and guidance in this directive and handbook apply to all NRC employees.

### Handbook

(5.5-06)

Handbook 5.5 describes the process for preparing and issuing news releases.



# Public Affairs Program

---

## Handbook

5.5

---

## Contents

Public Affairs Program .....	1
News Release (A) .....	1
Preparation and Issuance of News Releases (B) .....	1
News Releases Involving SECY Papers (C) .....	2
Other Sources for News Releases (D) .....	4

## Public Affairs Program

### News Release (A)

News releases are the primary means for making available to the public through the news media, complete, accurate, and timely information on NRC activities. To effectively communicate information, news releases should be written clearly in plain language. News releases announce major policy decisions, actions, and speeches by the Commission and senior management, as well as other significant NRC activities of high public interest. These activities include, but are not limited to, rulemakings, licensing hearings, enforcement actions, advisory committee reports and meetings, special inspections, nuclear facility safety assessments, licensing actions, generic communications to licensees, significant public meetings and workshops, and NRC organization and management changes.

### Preparation and Issuance of News Releases (B)

News releases should be prepared before an NRC decision or action becomes final. Offices are expected to notify the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) as early as possible of planned activities that may be of public interest or could affect public confidence. There are numerous information sources that can trigger the need for a news release, including— (1)

- Commission decision papers (i.e., SECY papers) and concomitant staff requirements memoranda (SRMs) (a)
- Correspondence with licensees (b)
- Weekly information reports (c)
- Meeting and *Federal Register* notices (d)

## Preparation and Issuance of News Releases (B) (continued)

- Inspection and NUREG reports (e)
- Commissioner facility visits (f)
- NRC employee announcements (g)

Technical offices review news releases for accuracy. OPA ensures releases are written clearly in plain language and convey information of interest to the public in journalistic style. (2)

## News Releases Involving SECY Papers (C)

SECY papers that provide the Commission with policy, rulemaking and adjudicatory matters are a major source of information for news releases. When drafting a SECY paper, the originator should contact OPA to determine whether a news release is appropriate. If one is needed, either the originator or OPA may draft the news release. If the originator drafts the news release, OPA should review it before it is incorporated into the paper that goes forward to the Executive Director for Operations (EDO) and ultimately to the Commission. If OPA drafts the news release, the originator should review it for accuracy and completeness so that the version that goes into the SECY paper has agreement by both OPA and the originator. In this way, the Commission can see in advance how the final decision actually will be conveyed to the news media and the public. This process also eliminates the need for a separate Commission review of the news release after review of the SECY paper. (1)

The originating office determines the appropriate level of office review of a news release. This office also determines whether review of the news release is needed by another office such as the Office of the General Counsel. If so, the originating office

## News Releases Involving SECY Papers (C) (continued)

should obtain the additional review and resolve any comments before forwarding a **single set** of comments to OPA in a timely manner. OPA should receive **only one** set of comments on the news release from the originating office. (2)

Any changes to the news release must be communicated directly to OPA. There should not be multiple sources of changes or comments that OPA has to coordinate. Any revisions to the news release from the staff or the EDO's office are to be incorporated into the paper **before** it is forwarded to the Office of the Secretary of the Commission (SECY).

OPA must have on file the same version of the news release that goes forward to the Commission. (3)

Once the Commission votes on the recommendations in the SECY paper, an SRM is generated that reflects the Commission's decision. The SRM, SECY paper, and Commission voting record are made available to the public. In concert with the Commission decision being made public, OPA issues a **final** news release after making any changes requested by the Commission or required to reflect the SRM accurately. The originator of the SECY paper should communicate to OPA any changes directed by the Commission that affect the news release. (4)

OPA electronically sends the final news release to the Offices of Congressional Affairs (OCA) and State Programs (OSP) to allow advance notification of their constituents. A short time later, OPA posts the release to the external Web site (under the icon "News and Information" at <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/gmo/newsrel.htm>), faxes it to over 100 news organizations, and electronically mails it to NRC employees, the Public Document Room, certain trade publications, nuclear industry contacts, public interest groups, and hundreds of interested members of the public nationwide. In

## News Releases Involving SECY Papers (C) (continued)

addition, a weekly compilation of news releases (and speeches) is mailed worldwide to interested recipients. (5)

## Other Sources for News Releases (D)

For news releases about significant agency actions that are not contained in SECY papers, such as enforcement actions, special inspection team efforts, and high-interest public meetings, OPA drafts a news release and coordinates with the appropriate office. (1)

For those news releases dealing with a specific licensed facility, typically, a public affairs officer in the region drafts a release, which undergoes review and approval by OPA and regional management. An advance copy of the news release is customarily provided to OCA, OSP, and the affected licensee for information before the news release is posted to the NRC external Web site and distributed to news organizations and the public. (2)