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**NRC STAFF REACHES SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE
IN REVIEW OF WESTINGHOUSE AP600 ADVANCED REACTOR DESIGN**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued its advance final safety evaluation for the Westinghouse AP600 advanced reactor design, a significant milestone but not the final step in the design's approval process. Some issues remain to be resolved.

NRC expects to reach a decision in September on the final design approval. If it is approved, a rulemaking process is expected to ensue in order to certify the design in NRC's licensing regulations. This certification process includes an opportunity for public comment and for an informal public hearing before a final rule is adopted by the Commission.

Once a reactor design has final design approval, it can be referenced in an application for a nuclear power plant license. But the design would still be subject to litigation in a contested licensing proceeding in the United States. Once the design is certified by rulemaking, however, it is not subject to litigation.

The 2400-page advance final safety evaluation report contains the agency staff's technical evaluation for the AP600 application. It includes some issues remaining to be resolved. It will be used during NRC's continuing discussions with Westinghouse during the summer, as well as in the design assessment by the NRC Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards.

A copy of the report will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room in Washington, D.C., in early June once Westinghouse has reviewed the document for proprietary data.

NRC received the Westinghouse AP600 design application in June 1992.

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