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NRC MERGES ADVISORY COMMITTEES ON REACTOR SAFEGUARDS AND NUCLEAR WASTE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has decided to merge its Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste and Materials (ACNW&M) into the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) to reflect the changing workloads and technical challenges facing the agency.

The merger anticipates increasing need for expertise in health physics, waste management, and earth sciences in the agency's licensing reviews for new reactors, the mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel fabrication facility and facilities related to the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP).

"The Commission has benefited immensely from the expertise and advice of the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste and Materials," NRC Chairman Dale E. Klein said. "We thank these eminent scholars and will continue to draw on their assistance as a subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards."

The Commission established the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste in 1988 to advise the Commission on high-level waste and low-level waste issues. Previously, this function was performed by the Waste Management Subcommittee of the ACRS. Last year, the ACNW was renamed the ACNW&M.

The ACNW&M's role has concluded in recent years as the NRC's low-level waste and decommissioning programs matured. Also, the committee's activities in high-level waste have decreased as the Department of Energy and the NRC have resolved most key technical issues in DOE's plans for a high-level waste repository; any remaining issues will be addressed in the license application, expected later this year. If and when DOE submits its license application, ACNW&M's members would be designated as adjudicatory advisors to support the Commission, limiting their interaction with agency staff.

The Commission has directed Frank Gillespie, executive director of the advisory committees, to draft a transition plan to implement the merger, including disposition of topics currently before the ACNW&M and whether those topics should continue under the new subcommittee. Until the transition plan is implemented, the ACNW&M will continue to meet under the direction of Dr. Michael Ryan, the current committee chairman. The ACNW&M will next meet Feb. 12-14.

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