



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

E-mail: opa.resource@nrc.gov Site: www.nrc.gov

Blog: <http://public-blog.nrc-gateway.gov>

No. 11-055

March 23, 2011

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION DIRECTS STAFF ON CONTINUING AGENCY RESPONSE TO JAPAN EVENTS; ADJUSTS COMMISSION SCHEDULE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has voted to launch a two-pronged review of U.S. nuclear power plant safety in the aftermath of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami and the resulting crisis at a Japanese nuclear power plant.

The Commission supported the establishment of an agency task force, made up of current senior managers and former NRC experts with relevant experience. The task force will conduct both short- and long-term analysis of the lessons that can be learned from the situation in Japan, and the results of their work will be made public.

“Our focus is always on ensuring the health and safety of the American people through our licensing and oversight of plants and radioactive materials in this country,” Chairman Jaczko said. “Examining all the available information from Japan is essential to understanding the event’s implications for the United States. We will perform a systematic and methodical review to see if there are changes that should be made to our programs and regulations to ensure protection of public health and safety.”

The Commission set an aggressive schedule for the task force to provide formal updates on the short-term effort in 30, 60 and 90 days. NRC senior technical staff provided the Commission a 90-minute briefing on Monday, as a first step. The staff reiterated their conclusions that the United States and its territories will avoid any harmful radiation levels as a result of the ongoing events at the Fukushima Daiichi plant damaged by the quake and subsequent tsunami.

NRC inspectors who are posted at every U.S. nuclear power plant will also support the task force’s short-term effort, supplemented as necessary by experts from the agency’s regional and headquarters offices.

“This work will help determine if any additional NRC responses, such as Orders requiring immediate action by U.S. plants, are called for, prior to completing an in-depth investigation of the information from events in Japan,” said NRC Executive Director for Operations Bill Borchardt.

The longer-term review will inform any permanent NRC regulation changes determined to be necessary. The Commission said it hopes the task force can begin the long-term evaluation in no later than 90 days, and added that the task force should provide a report with recommended actions within six months of the beginning of that effort.

The Commission also decided to revise its schedule for meetings and briefings to allow ample focus on the agency's response to events in Japan. Open Commission meetings on the status of the NRC response to the Japan earthquake are scheduled for April 14 and 28, a meeting on the staff's 30-day response is planned for May 3 and a meeting on the staff's 60-day response is planned for June 16. A revised Commission meeting schedule will be posted shortly on the NRC website.

###

News releases are available through a free *listserv* subscription at the following Web address: <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver.html>. The NRC homepage at www.nrc.gov also offers a SUBSCRIBE link. E-mail notifications are sent to subscribers when news releases are posted to NRC's website.