

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

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NRC ISSUES FINAL DESIGN APPROVAL FOR WESTINGHOUSE AP600 STANDARD NUCLEAR REACTOR

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a final design approval to Westinghouse Electric Company for its AP600 standard nuclear reactor design.

Issuance of the final design approval completes the NRC staff's technical review of the application for design certification received in 1992 and reflects the advice of the Commission's independent Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. The staff's detailed findings are contained in a 3,000-page Final Safety Evaluation Report. The NRC staff is now ready to begin the administrative review (rulemaking phase).

The AP600 design is for a nuclear power plant that would be capable of producing 600 megawatts of electricity. The plant, which can be assembled from modular components, features enhanced safety systems that rely on gravity and pressure differentials to safely shut the reactor down or mitigate the effects of an accident. It is designed for a 60-year operating life.

If Westinghouse chooses to proceed, the AP600 now will be subject to Commission certification as a standardized reactor design through a rulemaking process which will provide an opportunity for public comment and an informal public hearing.

Once certified by the Commission, a utility could use the standardized design in an application for a construction permit and provisional operating license without further consideration of the design unless there is significant new information that affects the staff's conclusions reached in the final design approval.

Use of a standardized reactor design would permit a utility to apply for a construction permit and provisional operating license in place of the historical two-step process involving separate proceedings at the construction permit and operating license stages. Use of standardized designs will enhance safety and create a more stable and predictable regulatory environment.

The AP600 final design approval document will be formally presented at a ceremony attended by the Commission at 1:30 p.m., Friday, September 11, in the lobby of the NRC's Two White Flint North headquarters, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland. Remarks will be presented by NRC Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson, NRC senior managers and Westinghouse officials.

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