



NRC NEWS

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NRC, ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS UPDATE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COOPERATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Army Corps of Engineers have revised their interagency agreement regarding environmental reviews for proposed nuclear power plants as well as significant actions at existing plants. The agencies will coordinate early in these reviews to ensure they share all the information necessary for carrying out their respective regulatory duties.

The NRC's licensing process ensures public health and safety, as well as the environment, are maintained during commercial use of nuclear materials, including nuclear power plants. The NRC takes the lead in meeting the National Environmental Policy Act's (NEPA) requirements during that process. The Corps protects U.S. waters and wetlands through the provisions of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and the Clean Water Act, and administers permits for such purposes.

"We're now in a better position to work efficiently with the Corps as we come to our decisions on more than a dozen new reactor applications," said Bill Borchardt, the NRC's Executive Director for Operations. "The technical expertise both agencies bring to bear on these reviews means the public can be confident we'll reach accurate conclusions regarding these projects' potential environmental impacts."

"I'm pleased that this interagency agreement will improve the energy regulatory process and carry out the President's directives to facilitate America's energy independence while assuring the highest standards for environmental quality," said John Paul Woodley, Jr., Army Assistant Secretary for Civil Works.

Borchardt and Woodley signed the agreement, which lays out the two agencies' separate roles and agrees that the NRC's and the Corps' licensing and permit processes will start essentially simultaneously. The agreement names the NRC as the lead NEPA agency for preparing an environmental analysis on a proposed nuclear power plant. In this role, the NRC will strive to coordinate early with the Corps to address Clean Water Act permitting

requirements. The Corps will complete an independent permit decision in carrying out its regulatory responsibilities. The agreement includes a process for resolving any instances where the two agencies disagree on a proposed plant's compliance with the agencies' respective rules.

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