



NRC NEWS

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NRC CHAIRMAN GREGORY B. JACZKO'S PREPARED REMARKS FOR TODAY'S MEETING ON THE AGENCY ACTION REVIEW MEETING

Good morning. The Commission meets today to receive a briefing on the results of the Agency Action Review Meeting (AARM). As one of the final steps in the agency's annual evaluation of how our licensees are performing, I believe that this is one of the most important meetings the Commission holds.

In 2009, both reactor and material licensees demonstrated good performance overall. At this year's AARM, there were no reactor licensees that warranted discussion, and only two materials licensees that did. The Commission is aware of the safety culture challenges that Nuclear Fuel Services has experienced, as well as the multiple medical events at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Philadelphia. We will be interested to hear from these licensees later this morning on how they plan to move forward in addressing these issues.

Although we have found that many licensees have performed very effectively, the agency always must be concerned with those that need to improve their performance in certain areas.

In addition to evaluating licensee performance, one of the key purposes of the AARM is also to assess the effectiveness of the Reactor Oversight Process (ROP). Over the last 10 years, the ROP has proven to be a robust program, yet flexible and nimble enough to respond to new issues. One example of that has been the agency's incorporation of safety culture into the ROP. We need to continually reevaluate the ROP to ensure that its inspections and indicators are providing us a sound understanding of actual plant performance.

We also should never lose sight of the fact that the lynchpin of the ROP is the corrective action program. As we evaluate the ROP, it is important that we make sure that the corrective action program remains effective by maintaining a low threshold for identifying problems.

During today's meeting, the Commission first will hear presentations from the NRC staff, and then from two panels of representatives from the Nuclear Fuel Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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