

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN STEPHEN BURNS

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TUESDAY

MARCH 10, 2015

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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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The Opening Session of the Regulatory Information Conference began at 8:30 a.m. at the Bethesda Marriott Hotel & Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, Rockville, Maryland.

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

1  
2 MR. DEAN: And now for our keynote  
3 speaker. The Honorable Stephen G. Burns was sworn in  
4 as a Commissioner of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory  
5 Commission November 5, 2014 to a term ending June 30,  
6 2019. President Obama designated Mr. Burns as the 16th  
7 Chairman of the NRC effective January 1, 2015.

8 Chairman Burns has had a distinguished  
9 career with the NRC and internationally. Immediately  
10 prior to rejoining the NRC Chairman Burns was the head  
11 of legal affairs for the Nuclear Energy Agency of the  
12 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
13 in Paris from 2012 to 2014.

14 Prior to assuming his post at the NEA,  
15 Chairman Burns was a career employee at the NRC from  
16 1978 to 2012. He has served in a variety of challenging  
17 roles during his 33-year NRC career. And he served as  
18 the Deputy General Counsel from 1998 until 2009. And  
19 then he was the NRC's General Counsel from May 2009  
20 until April 2012.

21 Also of note, Chairman Burns was the  
22 Executive Assistant to former NRC Chairman Kenneth M.  
23 Carr. And the Director of the Office of Commission  
24 Appellate Adjudication.

25 Chairman Burns received the NRC's

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1 Distinguished Service Award in 2001. And the  
2 Presidential Meritorious Executive Rank Award in 1998  
3 and 2008.

4 Chairman Burns received his J.D. degree  
5 with honors in 1978 from the George Washington  
6 University in Washington, D.C. and his B.A. degree of  
7 magna cum laude in 1975 from Colgate University in  
8 Hamilton, New York.

9 And on a personal note, I've had the  
10 pleasure to work very closely with Chairman Burns  
11 several times throughout my career. And I can attest  
12 not only to his tremendous legal and regulatory acumen,  
13 but his calm, even manner in dealing with challenging  
14 issues.

15 It's a great pleasure to have him as our  
16 Chairman. And I give you Chairman Stephen Burns.

17 (Applause)

18 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks Bill. One of the  
19 things I recognize coming back and now I'm supposed to  
20 follow that legal advice I gave for so many years here.  
21 That's a tough thing to do sometimes.

22 Well, good morning. And I again I think  
23 Bill for the introduction. And I would like to take  
24 this opportunity to say good morning to all of you.  
25 Particularly my fellow Commissioners, the NRC staff,

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1 our distinguished international guests who have joined  
2 us. Representatives of industry NGOs and everyone  
3 else who is interested in our program.

4 And I thank you for attending this 27th  
5 Annual Regulatory Information Conference. I actually  
6 happen to be down at the Mayflower Hotel where the first  
7 conference was held 27 years ago. It was a little bit  
8 different event.

9 I was there following my wife around,  
10 gathering information for my daughter's wedding. You  
11 know, wedding cakes, wedding dresses, vendors, things  
12 like this. But I actually remember accompanying well  
13 then, I think Commissioner Carr to the first RIC down  
14 in the Mayflower. And I think looking at our website,  
15 it was something we had about 500 participants that  
16 year. We've grown to over 3,000. So this really is  
17 quite an event.

18 And it's actually my first one that I've  
19 been back to since 2011, right before the Fukushima  
20 Daiichi accident. So, I'm interested in particularly  
21 in our program and to reflect on where we have gone.

22 As Bill indicated, I retired from the NRC  
23 in 2012. And I spent three years of retirement in Paris  
24 working for the OECD and the NEA, which was a great  
25 experience.

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1           And I'm happy to see actually a number of  
2 faces I recognize from both NEA, from the CSNI and the  
3 CNRA. And others in the international community who  
4 I was able to serve and get to know a little bit during  
5 my sojourn in Paris.

6           But I want to reflect a little bit today  
7 on where we've been, but more importantly, where we're  
8 going as NRC. This year we commemorate our 40th  
9 anniversary of our creation as an agency. Many of us  
10 can recall, and some of us have lived through some of  
11 the seminal moments in the history of at least of the  
12 NRC.

13           The Browns Ferry fire in 1975. The  
14 accident at Three Mile Island in 1979. The terrorist  
15 attacks and the response to them that occurred in  
16 September 2001. And more recently our response to the  
17 Fukushima Daiichi accident.

18           Also significant over that time and not  
19 just events, but changes in the Agency's processes.  
20 And the efforts to strengthen and make more coherent  
21 the regulatory paradigm. The evaluation for example  
22 of operating experience. The backfit rule.  
23 Development of the framework for emergency planning and  
24 preparedness. Particularly after Three Mile Island.

25           The adoption of safety goals. The

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1 maintenance rule. Security enhancements. The  
2 establishment of the principles of good regulation  
3 which guide our work here at the NRC. These events and  
4 efforts all maintain special importance today.

5           Despite these many changes and challenges,  
6 I think it's worth noting that the basic organizational  
7 structure and institutional framework of the NRC has  
8 been relatively constant over this time since our  
9 creation 40 years ago. We've had high points. We've  
10 had a few turning points. We've had a few moments of  
11 reflection in our history.

12           But on the whole, I think the Commission's  
13 structure has served the public well over the years.  
14 And it's contributed to a record of effective  
15 regulation.

16           I think we've learned from experience.  
17 Not only from our own, but from our international  
18 partners. And we've adapted to the challenges put  
19 before us. And as we look to the future, there are  
20 certain aspects of the NRC that I think will remain  
21 unchanged. Namely, our commitment to assuring that  
22 the civilian uses of nuclear energy and radioactive  
23 material do not pose a threat to the public health and  
24 safety or the common defense and security.

25           So the NRC is now 40. What does that mean?

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1 Some might consider this a time for a mid-life crisis.  
2 But I see it as an opportunity for the agency to not  
3 only reflect on where we've been. But to look forward  
4 to where we're going.

5 As many of you know, the Atomic Energy Act  
6 of 1954 as amended, sets the initial licensing period  
7 for a nuclear reactor in the United States at 40 years.  
8 But allows for renewals of those licenses.

9 Perhaps it's apropos then to think of the  
10 NRC as it reaches its 40th year as reaching its own  
11 timely renewal period. Surely the environment in  
12 which we find ourselves today suggests not only that  
13 we reflect on the journey of the last 40 years, but also  
14 that we refresh and renew in a timely and purposeful  
15 way our perspective on the road ahead.

16 Over the last decade and a half, we have  
17 seen the NRC go from an agency of about 2,700 employees  
18 in the year 2000 to one with approximately 4,000 in  
19 2010, to just about 3,700 employees today. Going  
20 forward, it's incumbent on the Commission to ensure  
21 that the NRC's organizational structure is right sized  
22 so that the Agency has the personnel it needs to perform  
23 its mission and to be an effective regulator while still  
24 being accountable and prudent in our expenditure of  
25 resources. So how might we do that?

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1           In June 2014 before I returned to the NRC,  
2           the staff embarked with Commission support on an effort  
3           called Project Aim 2020. The Project, which had as I  
4           said, a charter established by the Commission, was  
5           initiated as a collaboration between the NRC's  
6           Executive Director for Operations and the Chief  
7           Financial Officer.

8           The purpose of the Project is to identify  
9           ways to enhance the NRC's ability to plan and execute  
10          our mission more efficiently while adapting in a timely  
11          and in an effective manner to a dynamic environment.  
12          The Project Aim 2020 report represents a serious effort  
13          by the Agency's senior management to address  
14          transformational and organizational challenges that  
15          lie ahead.

16          The report, which is currently under  
17          review by the Commission, contains a number of  
18          potentially impactful recommendations. And a copy of  
19          the report if you are interested, is available through  
20          the NRC website.

21          In the first decade of this century, the  
22          Agency grew significantly. Primary drivers for the  
23          growth included the need to enhance security and  
24          incident response in the wake of the terrorist attacks  
25          of 2001. But also prepare for what was expected to be

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1 growth in the use of nuclear energy in the United  
2 States.

3 As all of you know, the economy suffered  
4 a significant crisis in 2008 that had a lingering  
5 impact. Greater competition in the energy markets due  
6 in part to the drop in the price of natural gas also  
7 changed the focus of many utilities.

8 The previous forecast in growth that led  
9 to the NRC's increase in staffing has now been adjusted  
10 downward in response to the changes in the nuclear  
11 industry that have resulted in fewer nuclear power  
12 plants and earlier decommissioning of some plants.  
13 The adjustments in turn are prompting the NRC to adapt  
14 its structure, its workforce, and regulatory processes  
15 to achieve our safety and security mission in an era  
16 of more constrained resources.

17 Now perhaps more than ever, the NRC is  
18 being scrutinized by its stakeholders for its  
19 responsible use of resources. As well as for the  
20 regulatory requirements it imposes. The NRC must  
21 position itself and reposition itself to function as  
22 an even more effective and efficient regulator in this  
23 environment while retaining the capability to respond  
24 in an agile manner to a range of possible futures.

25 However, this repositioning cannot be

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1 characterized as merely something that means across the  
2 board reduction in staffing or resources or  
3 regulations. Although the forecasted wave of new  
4 reactor licensing did not happen as anticipated a few  
5 years ago, our workload has increased in other areas.

6 For example, we've seen the Agency's as  
7 well as the industry's response to the Fukushima  
8 Daiichi accident. The unexpected decommissioning of  
9 several reactor units earlier than their expected --  
10 end of their expected life. As well as other areas of  
11 workload increase, such as cyber security. Preparing  
12 and renewing license applications for medical isotope  
13 production. And the potential for small modular  
14 reactors.

15 Additionally, the NRC is readying itself  
16 to receive and renew reactor renewal applications that  
17 could propose an extension of an existing reactor's  
18 life beyond 60 years. The NRC has also initiated an  
19 effort to stabilize and improve the Agency's existing  
20 reactor amendment licensing backlog through the  
21 reallocation of resources from lower priority work and  
22 an expanded use of contractor support.

23 And although we do not anticipate complete  
24 resolution of the backlog this fiscal year, the Agency  
25 is making progress. Accordingly, 40 years since its

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1 creation, the NRC's adjustment in its organization,  
2 while necessary to remain an effective and efficient  
3 regulator, also needs to be well thought out and  
4 carefully implemented.

5 Now for a moment, let's just step back and  
6 consider how we get to where we need to be. The goals  
7 of the Project Aim 2020 are to improve efficiency and  
8 accomplishing our safety, security and safeguards  
9 mission by retaining, attracting and developing a  
10 diverse group of people with the right skills to  
11 accomplish our mission efficiently and effectively.

12 Streamlining NRC processes where  
13 appropriate to be leaner, using resources wisely,  
14 limiting overhead costs in both mission and support  
15 functions and executing our regulatory functions and  
16 making decisions in a more timely and effective manner.  
17 That's a tall order. The Commission must consider a  
18 lot of factors. Many factors as part of its final  
19 decision making process about how we move forward. And  
20 we're doing that.

21 We're sensitive to the potential effect on  
22 the moral and on the decisions that such decisions may  
23 have on Agency staff. We're a world class  
24 organization. We're made up of a lot of dedicated  
25 people. We're committed to this critical mission.

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1 And it's imperative then on our implementation of these  
2 decisions that we effectively communicate the basis for  
3 our decisions and perhaps more importantly, make sure  
4 that the staff understand and embrace the need for  
5 change, but the right kind of change.

6 However, although important, the  
7 Commission's deliberations that comes out of Project  
8 Aim 2020 represent only one aspect of addressing our  
9 future. Focusing on the here and now, we recently  
10 proposed our 2016 budget to the Congress. The proposal  
11 shows that the NRC anticipates some leaner resource  
12 requirements.

13 Our budget for the next fiscal year  
14 reflects our efforts to respond to the new context in  
15 which we find ourselves. Our budget demonstrates our  
16 commitment to operate more effectively, but to assure  
17 that we carry out our mission of safety and security.

18 Because we are largely a fee-based agency,  
19 I expect the upcoming fee rule for 2015, which will be  
20 published in the next couple of weeks, to reflect an  
21 overall reduction in licensing annual and hourly fees.  
22 Industry projections of planned activities have been  
23 and will continue to be an important input to our  
24 resource needs and planning and a driver of NRC costs.

25 NRC relies in large part on the industry's

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1 projection of future licensing workloads in order to  
2 inform our own strategic planning and budget  
3 information. To ensure that we're not an impediment  
4 to enabling the safe and secure use of nuclear materials  
5 and facilities as permitted under the Atomic Energy  
6 Act. We need the industry's help to provide accurate  
7 and timely projections so that the NRC can properly for  
8 its future work.

9           Although the Agency's workload is  
10 changing, in some areas getting smaller, I'd be remiss  
11 if I did not mention the Agency's and the industry's  
12 efforts to expend a significant amount of time and  
13 attention and resources to address the lessons learned  
14 from the Fukushima Daiichi accident. Tomorrow of  
15 course, March 11, marks the four-year anniversary of  
16 these events.

17           And both the NRC and the industry in the  
18 U.S. as well as elsewhere, have taken swift and decisive  
19 action to address many of the key lessons learned from  
20 that event. Due to the extraordinary efforts of the  
21 staff and of the industry, a number of significant  
22 enhancements to safety have already been implemented  
23 at power plants.

24           And the vast majority of those most safety  
25 significant actions are targeted for completion by the

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1 end of 2016. It's one of my priorities to see that we  
2 do what we can, all that we can, to meet that goal.

3 One of the NRC lessons learned  
4 initiatives, have and will continue to result in  
5 significant safety improvements at U.S. nuclear power  
6 plants. NRC is committed to bringing the remaining  
7 enhancements to timely closure. The accident also  
8 underscored the importance of international  
9 cooperation in promoting nuclear safety around the  
10 world in countries with well established nuclear power  
11 programs as well as in newcomer countries.

12 My recent experience at the OECD, NEA  
13 demonstrated the benefits of cooperation through joint  
14 research agreements and developing consensus  
15 standards, as well as through commitment to the  
16 effective implementation of international agreements  
17 in the field of nuclear energy. The NRC engages  
18 frequently with our international counterparts to aid  
19 us in carrying out our safety mission as well.

20 As many of you know, a diplomatic  
21 conference was held last month in February at the  
22 International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. And it  
23 related to the convention on nuclear safety, to which  
24 the United States is a contracting party.

25 Although there were different approaches

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1 initially to how best reflect the contracting parties'  
2 commitment to nuclear safety, the parties ultimately  
3 adopted unanimously the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear  
4 Safety. The Vienna Declaration is intended to  
5 strengthen each contracting party's commitment to  
6 nuclear safety in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi  
7 accident through principles for implementation that  
8 are intended to prevent accidents, to mitigate the  
9 radiological accidents and mitigate the radiological  
10 consequences if an accident occurs.

11  
12 Under the three principles of the Vienna  
13 Declaration, new power plants are to be designed, sited  
14 and constructed consistent with the objective of  
15 preventing accidents during commissioning and  
16 operation. Comprehensive and safe systematic safety  
17 assessments are to be carried out periodically and  
18 regularly for existing facilities during their  
19 lifetime. And national requirements and regulations  
20 to address these principles are to take into account  
21 the relevant IAEA safety standards and other good  
22 practices.

23 The NRC will continue to work with our  
24 counterparts across the world to ensure that these  
25 principles are given meaning. As we already have done

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1 through the safety enhancements adopted in this country  
2 following the accident.

3 As we now stand at the beginning of NRC's  
4 next decade, we do expect to see small modular reactors  
5 and potentially advanced reactor technologies come  
6 before us for evaluation and licensing consideration.  
7 The NRC is willing and able to work with the industry,  
8 the public and the international community to develop  
9 a framework for more appropriate -- for new reactor  
10 technologies.

11 The Office of New Reactors at the NRC is  
12 making progress on several fronts and is staying  
13 abreast of industry's commitment to advance reactor  
14 designs. For example, we have undertaken a recent  
15 report developed in cooperation with the Department of  
16 Energy on general design criteria for non-light water  
17 reactors.

18 Because there's most small modular  
19 reactors being considered are considered on light water  
20 technologies, the Agency is well postured to accept and  
21 evaluate these applications based on these  
22 technologies. With respect to non-light reactor  
23 technology, although I'm confident that the NRC can  
24 effectively manage an application, I do recognize that  
25 vendors interested in developing such technologies,

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1 may be interested in greater clarity regarding the  
2 application requirements and the standards for review.

3 The NRC is taking a hard look at this area.  
4 However, without a specific applicant and intense  
5 pressure on budget and resources, it is challenging for  
6 us to be too forward leaning and expend significant  
7 resources on the development on an entirely new  
8 regulatory framework.

9 To come full circle, in looking backward  
10 and looking forward, I would like to close by observing  
11 for the last 40 years, the NRC has accomplished a great  
12 deal by working with the industry, by working with the  
13 public and other stakeholders. And I've been  
14 fortunate to be here for more than 34 of those years  
15 with a slight interruption and now I begin again.

16 And I've had the privilege of working with  
17 many dedicated colleagues and have seen the agency  
18 achieve success in often difficult times. The one  
19 constant is that we have committed professionals here  
20 at the NRC that make up the Agency. And they've always  
21 endeavored to ensure that the NRC fulfills its missions  
22 to protect people and the environment.

23 With that said, and looking forward, I'm  
24 equally fortunate to be here at the beginning of the  
25 next 40 years. I promise not to be here at the end of

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1 those 40 years. But the Agency is poised, I think, to  
2 meet the challenges of our future, whatever it may  
3 bring. And to ensure the continuity of our important  
4 mission, to protect public health and safety and to  
5 ensure the common defense and security.

6 But we will need all of your help along the  
7 way. Every one of you. For the job of ensuring the  
8 continued safe use of nuclear energy, nuclear material  
9 and radioactive material is a responsibility that  
10 belongs to us all.

11 Thank you. And I wish you a very  
12 successful RIC.

13 (Applause)

14 MR. DEAN: So Chairman Burns, we have a  
15 handful of questions we've received so far. The  
16 audience is actually taking it pretty easy on you. Not  
17 that I'm encouraging others.

18 CHAIRMAN BURNS: These are all the ones I  
19 planted.

20 MR. DEAN: That's right. Okay. So, a  
21 lot of the questions deal with Project Aim, budget,  
22 what's driving us. One question that's related to that  
23 is, given that much of the expected new build in the  
24 U.S. has been put off, new reactors, several other  
25 countries are seriously considering building nuclear

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1 plants. How is the NRC aiding these countries?

2 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, we have  
3 cooperative arrangements with a number of countries.  
4 And I think that's the basic, I think that's the  
5 simplest terms, that's what we do. As I say, we provide  
6 resources. Obviously in some circumstances where  
7 there might be a U.S. design that's been certified, we  
8 can provide them information.

9 Sometimes we have teams that go to those  
10 countries and you know, look at what's underway. And  
11 I think we also try to learn from others. That's one  
12 of the, I think, the benefits that has been from the  
13 multinational design evaluation program, which I know  
14 former Chairman Diaz was a big advocate for. And the  
15 French and the Finns together found it.

16 So, that's a big area for cooperation as  
17 well through MDEP in terms of getting consistency or  
18 looking how standards are developed and applied in  
19 different countries to different designs.

20 MR. DEAN: Okay. The next question,  
21 actually, I'm going to combine a couple of questions  
22 because it's kind of the yin and yang of budget. One  
23 is, given the decline in new reactor work, is a 10  
24 percent reduction in the NRC budget adequate?  
25 Combined with the question that efficiency with

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1 resource is an important goal, but isn't there a point  
2 at which you can only do less with less?

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I didn't hear the end of  
4 that last one.

5 MR. DEAN: Less with less. In other  
6 words, when you starting cutting too far, you're making  
7 yourself too lean.

8 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes, well I think  
9 starting with the first part of it, is we look at the  
10 budget from the standpoint of what we anticipate the  
11 work in the various areas. Obviously in the new  
12 reactor area, it has declined. But I also recall the  
13 Commission held the so-called mandatory hearing for the  
14 Fermi 3 project, which again, that's not our decision.

15 That's the decision of the applicant. If  
16 it receives the license, whether it will ultimately  
17 build it. They've talked about in effect banking that.  
18 There are one or two other applications like that. So  
19 there is still work for us to do.

20 We still have the ongoing oversight with  
21 respect to the construction at Summer and Vogtle and  
22 the conclusions at Watts Bar 2. So there is work in  
23 that area. We have scaled that work down where we have  
24 applications that we know at this point are coming in.

25 On the other hand, it's agreed. I think

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1 that the issue of when you say resources, this is not  
2 really a game of saying how low can you go in terms of  
3 merely cutting resources. We have to do this smartly.  
4 We have to look at how we're structured. Are we focused  
5 on the important things for safety and for security that  
6 are at the heart of our mission?

7 And what we're committed to do is assure  
8 that we have the resources that help us carry out our  
9 inspection program, which of course has oversight not  
10 only in the reactor area, power reactors, research  
11 reactors, but also materials, facilities. We have  
12 responsibility even though many of those materials  
13 licensees are licensed by individual states, we are  
14 required and responsible for assuring consistency  
15 across the board.

16 So there's a lot of work there. And I am  
17 concerned. And one of the things that we will do is  
18 make the case for where we need resources, we will ask  
19 for them. We want to be responsible about it.

20 But this is not merely about -- this is not  
21 merely about the cuts. This is about doing our job in  
22 an effective manner.

23 MR. DEAN: Okay. A related question  
24 relative to Project Aim is, in view of the resources  
25 challenges that we foresee for the NRC, is moving away

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1 from independent verification of safety analysis and  
2 calculations and instead putting more effort toward  
3 spot-checking licensee and applicant submissions in  
4 the future?

5 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I didn't hear the end.

6 MR. DEAN: Moving away from independent  
7 verification of safety analysis and calculations and  
8 instead putting more effort toward just spot-checking  
9 licensees and applicant submissions.

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I'm not quite sure how to  
11 answer that. I think that's actually within the staff,  
12 that the staff needs to recommend to the Commission,  
13 what's the appropriate balance.

14 I mean, since I was here as a young attorney  
15 and working with the staff for example on construction  
16 oversight in the late '70s and early '80s on operational  
17 oversight, we've always had a mix where we're doing spot  
18 checks. We do an audit type inspection.

19 I don't think anyone or no one should be  
20 under the illusion that we reverify everything that  
21 every licensee does. We don't have those kinds of  
22 resources. That's not the expectation of the  
23 regulator.

24 So the balance is something I think the  
25 Commission tries to achieve with the, you know, the

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1 insights, particularly your office Bill, for operating  
2 reactors as well as our Regional Administrators, who  
3 are responsible you know, on the line in the field for  
4 oversight.

5 MR. DEAN: Chairman, the next series of  
6 questions deal with various challenges that the NRC and  
7 industry are facing. The first one is, what will be  
8 the biggest challenge for the NRC in handling  
9 subsequent license renewal?

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well again, I think what  
11 the Commission decided last year, that the basic  
12 framework we have is sound. That it allows for a  
13 consideration. And again, what the challenge I would  
14 say always in licensing is good quality submittals that  
15 address the issues that are required to be addressed  
16 as part of the license application or renewal process.

17 I think those are the things. And again,  
18 the technical staff we have is capable of looking at  
19 those things and making, I think, sound decisions on  
20 them.

21 MR. DEAN: So I think the answer you just  
22 gave is probably applicable to this question as well.  
23 What is the nuclear industry's largest challenge in  
24 expediting review and approval of SMR designs?

25 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well again, what we all

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1 I think -- what we usually will say is, what you need  
2 is a high quality application. An application that  
3 addresses the criteria that are required for the review  
4 process.

5 And I think openness with the staff as it  
6 asks its questions about the review and reaches the --  
7 goes through the technical process of review.

8 MR. DEAN: The next question is really a  
9 two-part question. What do you believe is the greatest  
10 challenge facing the NRC over the next decade? And  
11 what do you believe is the greatest challenge facing  
12 the commercial nuclear industry over the next decade?

13 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well I think for the NRC,  
14 I think we've outlined it. Is again, we're trying to  
15 maintain the heart and core of our mission. Which I  
16 think we do very well. And it's really adapting being  
17 able to adapt to circumstances as they arise.

18 Again, I think what I tried to outline in  
19 my presentation was that we see -- we can't easily  
20 predict the future. But we have to be able to try to  
21 adapt to it as it comes while maintaining our core --  
22 the core values and the core mission that we have.

23 For the industry itself, I think that's  
24 better answered by the industry in many ways.

25 MR. DEAN: Do you believe that there is an

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1 opportunity to enhance the relationship of the NRC with  
2 Congressional leaders?

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well I think there's  
4 always work that we can do. I've been trying to do some  
5 outreach just to introduce myself, or reintroduce  
6 myself now that I've come back. I know other  
7 Commissioners do as well.

8 I think what we want to do with the Congress  
9 is in effect tell our story. Is that we have an  
10 important mission here. You've entrusted us. After  
11 all, it's the Congress that's responsible for passing  
12 the legislation that created us. To understand how we  
13 carry out that mission. And I think communicating that  
14 is important.

15 And being responsive in the sense of the  
16 legitimate questions that Congressional oversight and  
17 Congressional appropriators have about how do you use  
18 your resources? What did you learn from this  
19 experience? Those types of things are things I think  
20 we can do for them.

21 MR. DEAN: Chairman, what is your view of  
22 the cumulative effects of regulation initiative in a  
23 period of finite resources?

24 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well the Commission  
25 initiated this -- the cumulative effects initiative

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1 right before I left the Agency for the NEA, late 2011,  
2 2012. And it is not something that is done in a vacuum  
3 with respect to other -- for example, with respect to  
4 other federal agencies. Remember, the Administration  
5 issued a memorandum with respect to looking at  
6 cumulative effects.

7 I think it's a good initiative from the  
8 standpoint that it helps us think about the  
9 significance of what we're doing. And it's necessity  
10 ultimately to safety or to security. Whatever the  
11 requirement is. And again, I view it as a way of try  
12 -- again, I focus on this being -- us being effective.  
13 Being efficient. Being agile.

14 In a way I think, in a real way, I think  
15 it helps us do that. Because it can help us focus on  
16 the most significant things from a safety or a security  
17 standpoint. And so understanding what the impact is.

18 I know one of the Commissioners has said  
19 I think very wisely, said we often sometimes we will  
20 get at the top of the Agency, papers, we vote on them.  
21 And sometimes we may miss that, how we do it. Because  
22 everything comes up.

23 You know, it's sort of like for those of  
24 you who remember the old Lucy Show, it reminds me of  
25 Lucy and Ethel at the candy -- on the candy machine and

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1 the candy things keep going fast. Well that's what it  
2 seems like with the SECY papers sometimes. You know,  
3 you've got to get them out and sign them out and all  
4 that.

5 But sometimes that doesn't allow us always  
6 -- if we look at it that way, it doesn't allow us to  
7 step back, think about what's the significance of what  
8 we do? What's the impact on resources within the  
9 Agency for things that are having an external impact?  
10 What are the real benefits that come about?

11 And we -- I mean we have process. I think  
12 this is another way of enhancing our decision making  
13 process. Just like in the 1980s, the backfit rule,  
14 which is still in play and still applied, also helps  
15 us in that regard.

16 MR. DEAN: The next questions center  
17 around public meetings. One of Chairman Macfarlane's  
18 initiatives was associated with enhancing public  
19 participation, including public meetings and some of  
20 which have had some degree of histrionics. How can we  
21 improve the public meetings that take place out into  
22 the field in terms of their content and structure?

23 And then the second piece of that is,  
24 should the NRC do more to involve and engage members  
25 of the public in the RIC?

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1                   CHAIRMAN BURNS:    Well, I'll take the  
2                   second part of the question first.  With respect to the  
3                   RIC, obviously it's an open forum.  Anybody -- it's  
4                   cost free from the terms of attendance, other than if  
5                   you're not, you know, you have to transport yourself  
6                   here.  From that standpoint, I think it's already a  
7                   very open forum.

8                   If there are -- and I also think from the  
9                   standpoint of the office -- your office and the research  
10                  office in terms of developing program, we take  
11                  suggestions and work on the content of the program.

12                  With the first part, is public discourse  
13                  in some of the areas can be very difficult.  You know,  
14                  particularly where there's a particular controversy  
15                  over a particular plant or a particular issue that the  
16                  NRC might be out there in a public meeting.

17                  I've been to some of those meetings across  
18                  my career that have been what I would call not the most  
19                  pleasant.  Maybe not the most polite.  We have to do  
20                  what we can.  We can't guarantee that.  But we do have  
21                  to do what we can to enhance the circumstances and the  
22                  environment to work with local officials, whether  
23                  that's the local police force, whether to ensure that  
24                  there's a safe environment for people.

25                  For the most part, our meetings I think go

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1 well. I think people respect what's going on and  
2 respect the people who are giving presentations. But  
3 you know, there are times I think we have to learn some  
4 lessons if we have some particular difficult ones.

5 And I know, I think this is an issue not  
6 only for us here in the U.S., I know in some other  
7 environments, other places, the public meetings can  
8 also be very hot.

9 MR. DEAN: Chairman, having spent time in  
10 France, do you have any thoughts on recycling used  
11 nuclear fuel?

12 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, obviously in  
13 France that is a policy. The United States since  
14 President Regan lifted the bar that was imposed by  
15 President Carter, it's permissible. But basically  
16 we've gone on it's a commercial, as I recall, a  
17 commercially based program, if those want to go in it.

18 I don't have any particular views on it  
19 with respect to it. You know, we would be prepared.  
20 Obviously the Agency to the extent we would have a  
21 regulatory role over certain facilities. We would be  
22 prepared or prepare ourselves to deal with that.

23 MR. DEAN: In a similar vein, how can the  
24 Commission deal expeditiously with, I think it's  
25 entrepreneurial non-light water advance reactors,

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1           likely without a traditional utility buyer?

2                   CHAIRMAN BURNS:   Well, I think and I  
3 alluded to, I think we are in a position, the staff's  
4 in a position to speak with those that might be  
5 interested in it. To understand what some of the  
6 issues are with respect to where the NRC has a role to  
7 play in terms of licensing, in terms of understanding  
8 what the acceptance criteria are.

9                   But again, because we are a fee-based  
10 agency, those who come in generally will have to have,  
11 be able to pay for the application. Be willing to pay  
12 for the application review.

13                   There has been some work I know in the  
14 Department of Energy in terms of working with some of  
15 those who might be interested in the newer  
16 technologies. But the development side, that's where  
17 that's going to have to be.

18                   What we can do, as I alluded to in my  
19 speech, we have been or are engaged I should say, in  
20 a project that looks at general design criteria for  
21 advanced reactor or non-light water reactor designs.  
22 And that's a type of work we can do to assure that our  
23 processes are as transparent as they can be.

24                   And that they -- also and again, this is  
25 consistent with our principles of good regulation, that

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1 they are repeatable. They're predictable in terms of  
2 what the criteria are and what the necessary hurdles  
3 are to obtain acceptance or licensing in those  
4 circumstances.

5 MR. DEAN: Okay. The next question is a  
6 budget related question. And it deals with the funding  
7 of Yucca Mountain licensing. Could you explain how  
8 Yucca Mountain was incorporated or not incorporated  
9 into the budget process?

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, those of you who  
11 have followed Yucca Mountain will know. What the  
12 court, I guess it was in 2013, in the mandamus decision  
13 order is that the money that the Agency had left over,  
14 which was then on the order of \$11 to \$13 million needed  
15 to be expended. The Agency needed to expend it.

16 What we've done is over that period of  
17 time, and we're continuing, although that's a dwindling  
18 pot of money if you will. We've completed the safety  
19 evaluation report. We are embarking on the  
20 supplemental environmental statement because the  
21 Department of Energy indicated that it would not be  
22 preparing that supplemental statement.

23 And then there are some other -- there's  
24 some other work related to the assurance that we have  
25 the archives of -- the documentary archives in the

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1 record and assuring that our SERs are properly spaced.  
2 Then that's it.

3 There is no money in the President's budget  
4 for Yucca Mountain. Either at the NRC or at the  
5 Department of Energy. And so, the question of whether  
6 other money would be appropriated is really a question  
7 for the Congress.

8 MR. DEAN: Okay. We have time for maybe  
9 two more questions. Is that okay?

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Okay.

11 MR. DEAN: Okay. Due to the future  
12 challenges at NRC, how much emphasis will the NRC place  
13 on revising regulations for the sake of international  
14 harmonization?

15 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well I think you have to  
16 look at that in the context of what the particular  
17 regulations are. I think it's important from our  
18 standpoint to understand what types of consensus  
19 standards there are in the international community.

20 In some circumstances the Agency, because  
21 the United States has committed to do that. For  
22 example the IAEA transport regulations, which are a  
23 DOT. They are in effect what we call, going off in a  
24 legal thing, we call soft law because they are basically  
25 -- they are suggestions by the IAEA because it doesn't

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1 have that kind of legislative or regulatory power.

2 But countries across the world adopt the  
3 transport regulations because they are the  
4 international consensus. That's important. That's  
5 important not only for consistency within our country.  
6 But for things like international commerce and assure  
7 that there is a uniform scheme.

8 I recognize in some other areas that that  
9 may be more controversial perhaps. But I think we  
10 always need to be looking at the developments in the  
11 international community and to see where it fits from  
12 us. Because not only is there a benefit in the  
13 consistency and transferability if you will, there's  
14 also a selfish national interest sometimes.

15 If, for example, things in terms of export  
16 -- exports, as I said in the transport example, it just  
17 makes things easier to do. So those are things we keep,  
18 you know, we keep in touch with the international  
19 community through IAEA type standards. Sometimes what  
20 NEA may develop. And I think that's important to do  
21 so.

22 MR. DEAN: Okay. I saved the hardest  
23 question for last. Do you have any specific goals  
24 related to visiting U.S. plants?

25 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes. I need to get out

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1 of Region II because the first three plants I've gone  
2 to are all out in Region II. But they're actually, it's  
3 been a very good experience there because I got to see  
4 the FLEX equipment at North Anna. I saw Watts Bar,  
5 which of course at Watts Bar 2 and Watts Bar 1, which  
6 is interesting for a "new build" is an interesting  
7 posture. And then of course I was down at Vogtle a  
8 couple of weeks ago.

9 I do want to get around to other plants.  
10 Some of you may or may not know, in my earlier life,  
11 I actually went to a fair number of U.S. power plants.  
12 But I think from my standpoint, I would like to get out  
13 to a variety of them and will be doing so over the next  
14 couple of years.

15 MR. DEAN: Okay. Thank you Chairman.

16 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks. Thank you.

17 (Applause)

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