

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CLEARPATH

NRC Modernizing Emergency Preparedness Regulations for Small Modular Reactors

Washington, DC – Wednesday, May 13, 2020 – This week, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) announced it is moving forward on modernizing the Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) regulations for new nuclear reactor designs. NRC is seeking comments on a proposed rule and associated draft regulatory guide on risk-informed, performance-based emergency preparedness requirements for small modular reactors and other new advanced reactor technologies.

“The operational profile of advanced nuclear reactors is rapidly improving, and the regulatory framework needs to keep up,” **said Rich Powell, ClearPath Executive Director.** “Recent policy reforms, like those included in the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, have pushed the NRC to make improvements, but much more could be done — like modernizing their emergency planning zones. This proposed rule establishes an important precedent for future advanced reactor emergency planning activities.”

Nuclear energy regulations, including those for EPZs, were based on the currently licensed fleet of large light water reactors (LWRs) which have characteristics that differ from the new generation of reactor designs. The next generation of reactors are built with improved safety characteristics and reduced overall risk, and regulations should be updated to accommodate these advancements.

In November, ClearPath, alongside Third Way and the U.S. Nuclear Industry Council, published a white paper, “Advanced Nuclear Reactors Justify Modernized Emergency Preparedness Requirements.” [Read the paper here.](#)

Also in November, U.S. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) and Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, sent a letter to the NRC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advocating for them to establish requirements that provide a pathway to approve and deploy advanced nuclear technologies. [Read their letter here.](#)

Historically, as a part of the licensing of a new nuclear reactor, the NRC has defined an EPZ surrounding the plant. The exact size and configuration of the EPZ can vary from plant to plant due to local emergency response needs and capabilities, the population surrounding the site,

topographic characteristics, access routes in the specific area, and the jurisdictional boundaries of the region. Today, NRC regulations set an EPZ of “about 10 miles” in a radius around the plant. This proposed rule can result in an EPZ at the site boundary or at two miles, depending on the specific safety and design characteristics of the reactor.

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ABOUT CLEARPATH

ClearPath (501(c)(3)) was established by businessman Jay Faison in 2014. ClearPath’s vision is that America leads in affordably powering the world with reliable clean energy. ClearPath’s mission is to develop and advance conservative policies that accelerate clean energy innovation. To advance that mission, ClearPath develops cutting-edge policy and collaborates with academics and industry. Learn more at clearpath.org. Follow us on Twitter: @JayFaison1, @powellrich, @ClearPathAction