

WASHINGTON, Sept. 11, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is developing a plan, in response to a court order, to resume its review of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) license application for the canceled Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository project in Nevada, NRC Chairman Allison Macfarlane said Wednesday at a Platts Energy Podium newsmaker event in Washington.

The plan's budget and specific details are still being worked out, Macfarlane said.

In response to questions, Macfarlane said NRC is "following the law" by "proceeding immediately" to resume the licensing process for the repository. DOE submitted its license application in 2008, but NRC suspended its review in 2011 after DOE canceled the project, citing opposition by the state of Nevada. Last month, after more than a year of deliberation, a federal appellate court ordered NRC to resume its licensing review, which the court said was required by federal law.

The commission is seeking input from agency staff and stakeholders on a plan to resume the review, Macfarlane said, but did not say when NRC might complete that plan or resume licensing work. She declined to comment on whether \$11.1 million in unobligated agency funds remaining for Yucca activities would be sufficient, or on how much NRC might request from

Congress for Yucca licensing in subsequent fiscal years.

Asked about leaks of radioactive water at Japan's Fukushima I nuclear plant, Macfarlane said NRC coordinates closely with Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority, and a bilateral steering committee on related issues meets a few times a year. NRC does not have a direct role in Fukushima cleanup, but the agency is monitoring Japan's response to develop lessons learned for U.S. nuclear power facilities, Macfarlane said.

She noted that amounts of radioactive water leaking at the plant are large, but water that finally reaches the ocean is "far, far below" regulatory limits in U.S. drinking water standards.

The U.S. nuclear industry has made large investments in upgrading security at its facilities since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Macfarlane said. "Significant improvements" have been made, and the commission meets twice a year to review the adequacy of security requirements, she said.

A recording of the Allison Macfarlane Platts Energy Podium session is available via podcast at this link: <http://plts.co/macfarlanePEP> .

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