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Prepared Remarks of NRC Chairman Stephen G. Burns

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Yucca Mountain

Certainly an area that has received significant attention throughout the life of the NRC, as much now as ever, is the Nation's long-term strategy for disposal of high-level waste. In 2013, the NRC was directed by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals to resume its review of the Yucca Mountain construction authorization application using previously appropriated carry over funds. In January 2015, the staff completed and published the final volumes of the Safety Evaluation Report. In the report, the staff concluded that the Department of Energy's (DOE) application met regulatory requirements, except for certain requirements related to ownership of land and water rights. At the direction of the Commission, the staff has begun work on a supplement to DOE's environmental impact statement to address the impacts of the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain on groundwater as well as the impacts from groundwater discharges to the surface. The staff expects to publish that supplemental environmental impact statement in the spring of 2016.

Before any decision can be made on the Yucca Mountain construction authorization application, the supplemental environmental impact statement would have to be completed, an adjudicatory hearing would have to be held which presumes that the applicant will take an active role, and the Commission would have to complete its review of contested and uncontested issues. It is uncertain how long it would take to resolve the existing 288 issues that were admitted in the hearing (called "contentions"), not considering possible new or amended challenges. The agency's preliminary cost estimate for completing the license review and making a decision on whether to authorize construction of the repository is approximately \$330 million. This estimate does not include any costs that DOE might incur as the applicant.