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NRC Approval of TVA Early Site Permit Establishes Important Precedent for Advanced Nuclear Reactors

Clears path for small modular reactor to be built at Clinch River Site in Tennessee

WASHINGTON, DC -- ClearPath Action applauded the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) approval of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) early site permit (ESP) to build a small modular reactor at the Clinch River Site near the Oak Ridge National Lab in Tennessee.

“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 preapproval establishes an important precedent for future advanced reactor emergency planning activities.”

Last Congress, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act was signed into law directing the NRC to develop a technology-inclusive licensing framework that promotes safety without being prescriptive, while modifying the cost-recovery mechanism so utilities aren’t on the hook for other new companies’ technologies.

Last month, 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-SV), 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 Emergency Planning Zone (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. The TVA approach can result in an EPZ at the site boundary or at two miles, depending on the specific safety and design characteristics of the reactor selected within the envelope of the ESP.

About ClearPath Action

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