

Trump Administration Nuclear Safety Rollbacks  
Compiled by Columbia Riverkeeper

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- Executive orders

- E.O. 14302: Reinvigorating the Nuclear Industrial Base (May 29, 2025)
  - [Federal Register link](#)
  - Summary: Executive order emphasizing energy independence and power supplies for national security, with specific emphases on management of spent nuclear fuel and development of advanced fuel cycle capacities.
- E.O. 14299: Deploying Advanced Nuclear Reactor Technologies for National Security (May 29, 2025)
  - [Federal Register link](#)
  - Summary: This E.O. states that it is the federal government's policy to ensure the development and deployment of advanced nuclear technologies to support national security concerns. The E.O. also emphasizes using trade agreements and multilateral development banks to facilitate the U.S.'s involvement in international nuclear energy development.
- E.O. 14301: Reforming Nuclear Reactor Testing at the Department of Energy (May 23, 2025)
  - [Federal Register link](#)
  - Summary: This executive order states that it is the policy of this administration to foster nuclear innovation and bring advanced nuclear technologies into domestic production. The E.O. also states that the development of these advanced nuclear technologies by the Department of Energy would be for research rather than for commercial application.
- E.O. 14300: Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (May 29, 2025)
  - [Federal Register link](#)
  - Summary: Executive order trying to change the NRC's focus to encourage deployment of nuclear energy. For example, the EO directs that the personnel and functions of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) shall be reduced to the minimum necessary to fulfill ACRS' statutory obligations. The E.O. also directs NRC to reconsider its reliance on the linear no-threshold (LNT) model and the "as low as reasonably achievable" standard, asserting that these metrics are scientifically unsound.

- Statutes

- ADVANCE Act of 2024

- [Link to article about ADVANCE Act](#)
  - Summary: Reform for the NRC Executive Order has redundancies with the ADVANCE Act. These redundancies include that the NRC weigh the societal benefits of nuclear power alongside safety when regulating, and that the agency return decisions on all reactor license applications within 18 months of submittal. However, the 18-month deadline in the ADVANCE Act applies to relicensing of reactor designs that have already been approved and not to the new reactor designs currently being explored.
- Nuclear Waste Policy Act
  - Note: This Act came up in some secondary materials that I was reading, but I have not had time to look into the Act's language.
- Federal Register Notices
  - Notice of DOE's Categorical Exclusion for Advanced Nuclear Reactors (Feb. 2, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Fed. Reg. notice that DOE is creating a CE for authorization, siting, construction, operation, reauthorization, and decommissioning of advanced nuclear reactors for inclusion in its NEPA implementing procedures. In the notice, DOE also notes that it is including this CE in the component of its NEPA implementing procedures that is kept outside of the CFRs.
  - Notice of DOE's Worker Safety and Health Requirements To Support Reform of Nuclear Reactor Testing (Jan. 21, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Notice of a DOE proposed rulemaking to amend regulations for worker safety and health, and to expedite the deployment of advanced reactors under DOE's jurisdiction.
    - Note: Comments for this proposed rulemaking are being accepted until Feb. 20, 2026.
- Department of Energy (DOE) Documents
  - Fact Sheet: The Energy Department Is Delivering on Accelerating The Deployment Of Nuclear Power (Jan. 20, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: This fact sheet states that the Trump administration is pursuing a "nuclear renaissance." The fact sheet also provides a timeline for actions that the administration has taken in support of its vision for nuclear deployment.

- Secretary Wright’s Secretarial Order to “Unleash Golden Era of American Energy Dominance) (Feb. 5, 2025)
  - [Link](#)
  - Summary: As relevant to nuclear energy, the Order states that “America must lead the commercialization of affordable and abundant nuclear energy. As such, the Department will work diligently and creatively to enable the rapid deployment and export of next-generation nuclear technology.”
- Request for Information on Establishment of Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses (Jan. 28, 2026)
  - [Link](#)
  - [Link to pdf of RFI](#)
  - Summary from document itself: “The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE, or Department) seeks input from states interested in hosting potential Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses to anchor integrated, full-cycle nuclear ecosystems that could co-locate and support the entire nuclear value chain while exploring durable pathways for managing used nuclear materials in a safe, secure, and fiscally responsible manner.”
    - Note: I quoted this as opposed to paraphrasing it because I do not understand how viable the proposal is. For example, what does the phrase “a full-cycle nuclear ecosystem” mean?
  - Further notes:
    - I also found the following language troubling: “What is your state’s plan to engage stakeholders- including political entities, local communities, Tribal nations, environmental groups, industry partners- to ensure timely public acceptance and compliance with regulatory frameworks for all Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus functions?” (p. 22) In particular, the phrase “to ensure timely public acceptance” struck me as problematic.
- Radiation Protection of the Public and the Environment (updated on Jan. 30, 2025)
  - [Link](#)
  - Summary: Update to, and cancellation of, the Department of Energy’s prior version of this document. This updated document establishes specific acceptable levels of radiation exposure; it also still includes reference to the ALARA principle. (*see* p. 4–5).
  - Note: The standards outlined in this document are the ones that the Department of Energy has since revised, as outlined in one of NPR articles below.

- Office of Environmental Management, Hanford Site Crews Move First Radioactive Capsules to Dry Storage (Feb. 3, 2026)
  - [Link](#)
  - Summary: Information from DOE that one of eighteen concrete casks containing cesium and strontium was moved out of the Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility to a dry storage pad at Hanford.
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Documents
  - Mission Statement Guidance Implementation (May 2025)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: This document provides guidance for the implementation of NRC’s statutorily-mandated mission statement update. The document contains language like “integral to our success is the timely review of applications, including those with emergent technologies” and “allocate resources commensurate with the safety or security significance of the activity,” both of which somewhat echo language from the President and Department of Energy on approval for new reactors and nuclear safety measures.
  - NEIMA Milestone Schedules of Requested Activities of the Commission (May 23, 2025)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: In an effort to align its process with President Trump’s EO 14300 “Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission,” this document provides an updated timeline for the NRC to make decisions under the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act (NEIMA) on final safety evaluations.
- News Articles
  - NPR, The Trump Administration exempts new nuclear reactions from environmental review (Feb. 2, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article describes the DOE proposal to exclude advanced nuclear reactor development from aspects of NEPA review.
  - NPR, The Trump administration has secretly rewritten nuclear safety rules (Jan. 28, 2026)
    - [Link to article](#)
    - Summary: The administration is trying to accelerate the development of new nuclear reactors, with the DOE planning to build three new experimental commercial nuclear reactors by July 4, 2026. To do so, the Trump Administration has dramatically changed certain safety

- protocols—including stripping the ALARA concept from DOE orders; DOE also got rid of a safety mechanism known as a “cognizant system engineer,” which required an engineer to take responsibility for understanding each part of a reactor that could lead to a severe accident if it failed; groundwater restrictions have been lessened; thresholds for accident investigations have been increased; security rules have been reduced; and environmental protections also have been reduced.
- NPR, Trump’s rush to build nuclear reactors across the U.S. raises safety worries (Dec. 17, 2025)
    - [Link to article](#)
    - Summary: This article discusses a new DOE pathway for the development of experimental nuclear reactors. Given that these reactors are experimental, they do not require NRC oversight. Instead, the experimental reactors can follow a DOE pathway to approval, which appears to have more relaxed standards than NRC’s approval standards.
  - E&E News, Congress eyes next steps on nuclear energy (Jan. 30, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article about nuclear legislation in the past year. Whereas the ADVANCE Act received overwhelming bipartisan consensus in 2024 and was voted in by a 88-2 margin in the Senate, there has been less consensus on nuclear issues in the past year. The articles notes that nuclear-focused legislation proposed in 2025 has centered on financial support for nuclear projects, revisiting the ALARA principle, and changes to NRC procedure that lawmakers assert can make the NRC more efficient.
  - E&E News, After 16 years, DOE resumes search for nuclear waste solution (Jan. 29, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article details how the Department of Energy (DOE) recently released a request for information (RFI) to potentially collaborate with states to create “Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses.” The article details how this RFI is part of an effort by DOE to establish long-term waste disposal sites for nuclear waste.
  - E&E News, Trump axes nuclear waste oversight panel (July 21, 2025)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article describes how in late July 2025 the Trump Administration fired seven of the board members from the U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, leaving, at that point in time, just one active member on the board.
  - E&E News, White House weighs NRC overhaul (May 14, 2025)

- [Link to article](#)
- Summary: This article outlines the four nuclear-energy Executive Orders that were released by the White House two weeks later. The article notes how the orders, which were in draft form at that point, give evidence of the administration’s desire to get around NRC safety standards and to support the tech industry’s growing energy demands.
- E&E News, DOE kills radiation standard (Jan. 13, 2026)
  - [Link](#)
  - Summary: Article states that DOE has removed ALARA from its regulations and there would be a subsequent process to decide on new safety standards, while specifically mentioning how the end of the ALARA principle can affect cleanup at places like Hanford. However, the article notes that this change does not directly affect the NRC, and nuclear reactor developers will still need to satisfy NRC standards before connecting to the grid.
- Energy Wire article about DOE possibly ending ALARA (Jan. 15, 2026)
  - [Link](#) (I’ve downloaded these E&E News articles because they likely will be behind a law school paywall; I can provide the pdfs upon request.)
  - Summary: Article details internal DOE memo about reforming ALARA. DOE spokesperson denied that ALARA has been “removed or modified.” However, an anonymous source in DOE said that the memo’s language on “[e]liminating ALARA is a significant reform that would reduce the economic and operational burdens on nuclear energy” is being treated as final even if that change has not yet been published in the Federal Register.
- E&E News article, DOE inks document to advance Hanford cleanup, senator says (Sept. 18, 2025)
  - [Link](#)
  - Summary: This article, from September 2025, details how DOE signed a key document to allow the vitrification plant at Hanford to move forward. The article follows up on prior reporting where Senator Murray had accused DOE of stalling on the vitrification plant approval.
- E&E New article, Wright ‘admitted’ stalling \$30B Hanford plant, senator says (Sept. 12, 2026)
  - [Link](#)
  - Summary: Article details Senator Murray’s allegations that DOE Secretary Wright had planned to stall approval for Hanford’s vitrification plant, despite a legally binding consent order to have the plant online by Oct. 15, 2025.
- Washington State Standard article, Hanford nuclear cleanup gets federal budget bump (Jan. 18, 2026)
  - [Link](#)

- Summary: Congress approved a \$3.2 billion budget for the Hanford nuclear reservation’s cleanup for fiscal year 2026, which is a more than \$200 million increase from the prior two years. This budget is more than what the Trump administration originally requested for Hanford, but it is almost \$3 billion less than what state officials believe is needed to keep the site’s cleanup on its legally mandated schedule.
  - Tri-City Herald, Hurling, forgotten building at nuclear site could get new life shaping AI (Feb. 4, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article about how one building at Hanford, the Fuels and Materials Examination Facility, is being leased to an entity known as General Matter as part of General Matter’s inquiry in purchasing land at Hanford for nuclear fuels development.
  - Northwest Public Broadcasting, US Department of Energy looks into ammonia leaks at Hanford’s Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (Jan. 28, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article about ammonia leaks at Hanford, including information about DOE officials visiting the site in response to leaks.
  - NY Times, Most Contaminated U.S. Nuclear Site Is Set to Be the Largest Solar Farm (Mar. 7, 2025)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Reporting on a proposed solar development on the Hanford site. The article is from March of last year, so there is a good chance that this project is no longer moving forward.
  - KOIN, Washington’s Hanford site, Bonneville Power Administration, see ‘mass firings’ by Trump admin (last updated Feb. 17, 2026)
    - [Link](#)
    - Summary: Article discusses impacts to the federal workforce at Hanford from DOGE-related firings earlier in 2025.
- NRC’s documents
  - Info about the ADVANCE Act (2024)
    - NRC Memo re: NRC Licensing Efficiency Update (Aug. 18, 2025)
      - [Link](#)
      - Summary: Memo discusses streamlining the nuclear licensing process, including, for example, using categorical exclusions to reduce NEPA review periods. Memo also discusses adhering to EO 14300’s mandate of a 18-month deadline to review new and

advanced reactor applications, and 12 months for license renewal applications.

- Other General Documents

- Bipartisan Nuclear Waste Report (Jan. 15, 2026)

- [Link](#)

- Note: The project was funded by a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur

- Foundation grant to Allison Macfarlane, a former head of the NRC.

- Summary: This Report discusses the need for a new entity to control the management and disposal of nuclear waste. The Report proposes that this entity could be a corporate entity, either a independent public-benefit corporation or a non-profit, or a joint corporate-federal government partnership. In addition, the Report raises the question of the funding in the Nuclear Waste Fund as a possible avenue to fund this proposed entity.

- Idaho National Laboratory, Reevaluation of Radiation Protection Standards for Workers and the Public Based on Current Scientific Evidence (July 2025)

- [Link](#)

- Summary: Apparently, this report was important for DOE's more recent efforts to change or reduce ALARA. The report's abstract states that "[t]he preponderance of available evidence suggests that current radiation protection frameworks may be overly conservative." The report proposes maintaining an annual occupational whole-body dose limit of 5,000 mrem/yr and eliminating all "as low as reasonably achievable" requirements and limits below this threshold.