



POSITION STATEMENT

EXISTING U.S. NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

*Adopted by the IEEE-USA
Board of Directors, 20 Nov. 2009*

IEEE-USA recognizes the need for the existing nuclear power plants in the United States, and it supports actions needed to keep them in operation, as much as possible, for the foreseeable future. IEEE-USA believes that these plants have operated and can continue to operate reliably and safely. These plants are essential to the base-load supply of economical electricity to consumers and businesses.

Nuclear power plants supply about 20 percent of the electricity consumed in the United States—even though they represent only about 10 percent of all production capacity—and generate 74 percent of all emission free electricity in the United States. Prematurely removing a significant number of such plants from service would cause disruption within the power system, because these plants make an important contribution to the nation's electric power supply and the stability of the electric grid.

IEEE-USA supports:

- Continued use of nuclear energy as a major component in a balanced portfolio of energy sources
- Continued re-licensing of nuclear plants that reach the end of terms of their license, under objective review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
- Urgent action to stem the increase in on-site storage of irradiated nuclear fuel elements
- Continued improvement in reactor operations and training, under the aegis of the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations and the World Association of Nuclear Operators
- Continued research and development of technology for safely extending the operation of existing plants beyond 60 years

When an existing nuclear plant shuts down, either planned or unplanned, there should be well defined processes in place to make sure there are no adverse impacts to the reliability or operating characteristics of the system it is connected to or any surrounding system.

IEEE-USA believes that the benefits of nuclear energy outweigh the minimal risks posed to the public by continued operation of these plants, under the oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The risks imposed by potential terrorism are manageable and acceptable, given significant upgrades in security at nuclear facilities since 2001.

This statement was developed by IEEE-USA's Energy Policy Committee and represents the considered judgment of a group of U.S. IEEE members with expertise in the subject field. IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of more than 210,000 engineers, scientists and allied professionals who are U.S. members of IEEE. The positions taken by IEEE-USA do not necessarily reflect the views of IEEE or its other organizational units.