

Unrestricted / Illimité

Opening Remarks

Hugh MacDiarmid
President
& Chief Executive Officer
AECL
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Port Hope
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Thank you Mr. President, and members of the Commission. My name is Hugh MacDiarmid, President and CEO of AECL.

Je voudrais vous presenter Monsieur Bill Pilkington, agent principal nucléaire pour EACL et Monsieur Bill Shorter, Conseiller en sûreté nucléaire et aussi plusieurs membres de notre équipe de gestion.

We are here today to update you on our progress in the repair of the NRU reactor at Chalk River, and to outline the next phases of the project to achieve the safe return of the NRU to service in the shortest time possible.

Mr. Pilkington will be taking you through the details of the repair and return to service plan in a moment.

First, I want to assure you that we are very conscious of the impact of the continued shutdown at Chalk River, and we recognize the concerns of the health, research and patient communities in Canada and abroad.

AECL's employees at the Chalk River facility have been working around the clock since the unplanned outage on May 14 to return the NRU to service safely and quickly.

I want to recognize their dedication and very hard work. Identifying the source of the leak and other potential areas of concern, determining the appropriate repair strategy, developing the required tools and executing the repair are enormous challenges on an ageing nuclear reactor.

We have the best people on the job, among the most expert and experienced in the world, supported by skilled suppliers and third party experts.

Second, I want to reiterate that we remain committed to transparency. We are communicating to Canadians about the nature of the problem and status of the repair through a variety of channels.

Our guidance on the duration of the shutdown continues to be founded on the best evidence available, including the most up-to-date analysis of the vessel condition, repair strategies, and critical path requirements for restart after a shutdown.

As you may know, we advised two weeks ago that, based on the ongoing assessment of the NRU condition and preferred repair techniques, we believe that the NRU will be returned to service during the first quarter of 2010.

We have also developed a detailed road map for the return to service. These activities comprise a three-phase NRU Repair & Return to Service Plan.

First phase was to do a condition assessment of the reactor and a process of identifying and selecting a repair technique. We have completed this phase. The second phase will be effecting the repair itself. And, the third phase will be returning the reactor to service. Those three phases interlock overlap to some degree and are going to ensure that we get this reactor back into service as soon as we possibly can.

Mr. Pilkington will describe in more detail, our inspection and analysis of the vessel, delineation of the repair strategies and development of the specialized tooling required.

I want to say that we appreciate the close working relationship with CNSC safety inspectors who are directly involved at the Chalk River site. This ensures that the return to service and reactor restarting process are as efficient and timely as possible.

As part of this process, on August 14th, AECL and the CNSC signed a Protocol for the NRU Restart Licensing Activities. This protocol outlines the administrative framework, milestones and service standards for the licensing activities required for restarting the NRU reactor. This protocol ensures, in that same spirit of transparency, that the full regulatory review process is followed, and when the NRU returns to service, it will operate safely while once again producing isotopes.

I'd now like to ask Mr. Pilkington, AECL's Chief Nuclear Officer, to provide you with details on these activities.

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