

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
38th Annual Regulatory Information Conference

RIC2026

Regulation, Innovation and
Collaboration for a Safer Tomorrow

March 10-12, 2026

Bethesda North Marriott Hotel
and Conference Center
Rockville, MD

#NRCRIC2026

NRC.gov



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Fueling Minds, Powering Reactors (W10)

Wednesday, March 11th, 2026

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Session Chair: Louis Caponi

Regulation, Innovation and Collaboration for a Safer Tomorrow

Fueling Minds, Powering Reactors (W10):

- Nuclear regulators from around the world will discuss how their organizations are recruiting and retaining the next generation of nuclear safety and security talent
- Presentations in this technical session will highlight:
 - Perspectives on knowledge transfer, educational opportunities and grants, training, benefits, and more.
- Follow-on from:
 - “Youth Panel” discussions held during the IAEA’s “International Conference on Effective Nuclear and Radiation Regulatory Systems: Preparing for the Future in a Rapidly Changing Environment” in 2023
 - “Nuke Kids on the Block” panel at the NRC’s 2024 RIC
- Conclude with open discussion and audience Q&A

**Louis
Caponi**

Risk Analyst

U.S. Nuclear
Regulatory
Commission



**Alexandra
Terres**

Reactor Systems
Engineer

U.S. Nuclear
Regulatory
Commission



**Auxiliadora
Guerrero**

Head of Regulation
and Legal Affairs

Organism for the
Implementation of
the Nuclear Energy
Program (OIPEN),
El Salvador



**Inna
Pletukhina**

Associate, Global
Nuclear Practice

Hunton Andrews
Kurth LLP, USA



**Dr. Jamila
Khamis Al
Suwaidi**

Acting Manager,
Safety Assessment

Federal Authority
for Nuclear
Regulation, UAE



Ryan Yap
Assistant Director

National
Environmental
Agency, Singapore



Contact Information

Louis Caponi

Risk Analyst

Division of Decommissioning, Uranium Recovery,
and Waste Programs

Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards

(E): louis.caponi@nrc.gov





Fulfilling the NRC Mission Today and Tomorrow

Louis Caponi, Risk Analyst



NRC's Recruitment Pipeline



Recruitment Pathways and Outreach



Benefits of these Initiatives



Early Engagement with a STEM focus



Support and Involvement during Educational Studies



Early Career, Full-Time Employment Opportunities

Recruitment Pathways and Outreach



Engaging early and making connections



Summer internships and entry-level job offers



Career fair events



Public job postings for all NRC locations



Recruitment Pathways and Outreach

1

- Early Engagement with a STEM focus

2

- Support and Involvement during Educational Studies

3

- Early Career, Full-Time Employment Opportunities



Benefits of these Initiatives

Strong and wide-reaching network



Extensive knowledge transfer



Sustains a highly technical work force



Improves retention rates



Early Engagement with a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) focus



Engaging High School Students

“A Week at the NRC”

- Started in 2017
- A Week’s mission is to enhance and increase the capability, diversity and size of the nation’s future STEM workforce.
- Grassroots program was inspired by volunteers participating in the Montgomery Science Fair.



Engaging High School Students

“A Week at the NRC”

- Four-day educational experience for high school students
- Activities and seminars designed for students to deepen their knowledge of nuclear technology, federal nuclear regulation, and gain insights into the diverse range of work conducted at the NRC



Support and Involvement during Educational Studies



Financial Support through Student Grants & Scholarships

Nuclear Education Program - Scholarship and Fellowship

- Supports degrees in nuclear science and engineering, to develop a workforce capable of supporting the design, construction, operation, and regulation of nuclear facilities and the safe handling of nuclear materials. Grants awarded to accredited U.S. institutions of higher education.

Nuclear Education Program - Trade School and Community College Scholarship

- Supports education in nuclear science and engineering, to develop a workforce capable of supporting the design, construction, operation, and regulation of nuclear facilities and the safe handling of nuclear materials.

Student Internships

- **Paid temporary positions for college students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in science, engineering, and other disciplines related to the NRC Mission**
- **89 days or less, perfect for a summer break**
- **Gain valuable experience working in a professional environment**
- **EmbraceNRC: volunteer-run networking, training, and engagement program**

Student Co-Ops

- **Paid positions for college students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in science, engineering, and other disciplines related to the NRC Mission**
- **Participants integrate alternating periods of academic study and work experience, or parallel periods of academic study and work experience.**
- **Full-time or part-time employment**



Resident Inspector Development Program



Honor Law Graduate Program



Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network

Early Career, Full-Time
Employment Opportunities



Resident Inspector Development Program (RIDP)

Develop competencies, including:

- (1) legal basis and regulatory processes
- (2) technical expertise
- (3) regulatory practices
- (4) personal and interpersonal effectiveness



Resident Inspector Development Program (RIDP)



Focused training to develop qualified inspectors that can adequately assess licensee compliance, identify deficiencies, and respond to emergent situations:

- Inspection Manual Chapter (IMC) 1245 “Qualification Program for Reactor Inspectors”
 1. Fundamental Level Training Program
 2. Basic Level Program
 3. Apprentice Level Program:
 - a) General Proficiency
 - b) Technical Proficiency
 4. Final Qualification Practical Assessment
- Refresher, Specialized and Advanced Training Activities

Office of the General Counsel: Honor Law Graduate (HLG) Program



- Established in 1972, the HLG Program is the primary mechanism for hiring entry-level attorneys at the NRC.
- Two-year program with rotational assignments to three different OGC divisions, with a broad range of assignments during each rotation.

Office of the General Counsel's Honor Law Graduate (HLG) Program



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- Two-year program with rotational assignments to three different OGC divisions, with a broad range of assignments during each rotation.
- Designed to provide maximum exposure to the work of the Office of the General Counsel. You will experience the office's diverse legal practice:
 - administrative litigation involving nuclear power plants
 - review environmental impact statements
 - draft proposed regulations for new or revised safety standards
 - review and litigation of personnel actions, equal employment opportunity cases, and government contract matters
 - work with the Solicitor in researching and preparing briefs for submission to the federal courts of appeals

Slide 22

MD1 [@Louis Caponi] I noticed that slides 22 and 23 contain mostly the same information, with the only difference being the additional details on the right side of this slide. Was that intentional?

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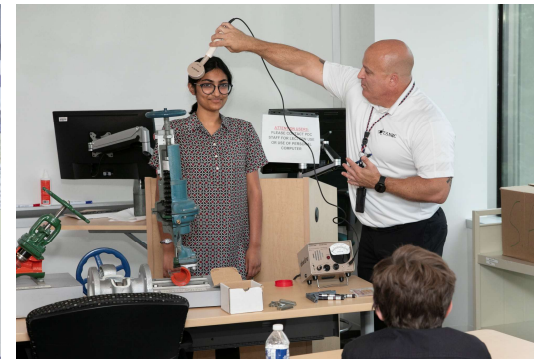
Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network (NRAN) Program

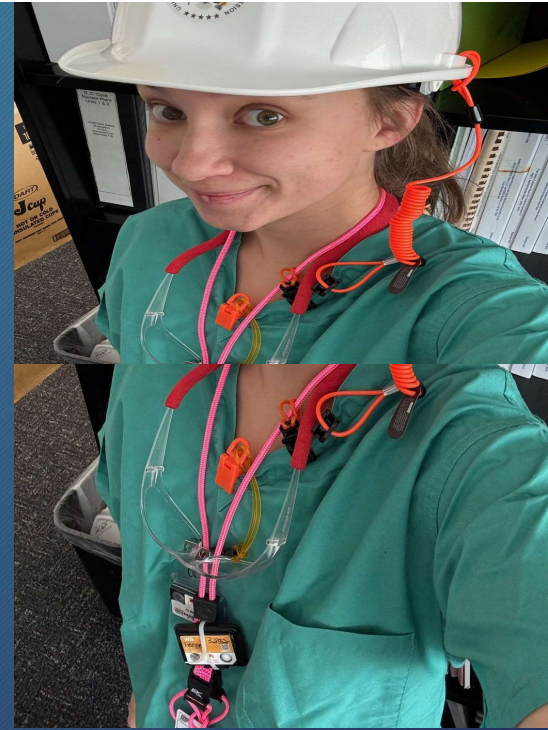
- 18-month training and development program for recently-graduated professionals in the fields of engineering and science.
- ADVANCE Act directed NRC to solicit for the program annually
- Member of the 2020 cohort
- Program Manager from 2024-2025



Conclusion

NRC has initiatives from high school to recent college graduates that support the Agency's needs for today and the future.





NRC Programs in Practice: Alexandra Terres, Reactor Systems Engineer



Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network (NRAN)

- Training program for recently graduated engineers and scientists
 - Recruits from various sources, e.g. universities and existing student development programs
- Develops well-rounded regulators in technical areas of agency need
- Advances technical and professional skills through direct project contributions and mission critical activities



Program Objectives

Publicly-available NRRAN
information can be found [here](#)



Training

Orientation to agency structure, mission, and public service.
Begin technical training, formal qualifications, and leadership competencies.



Apprenticeships

(3) five-month apprenticeships offered by Technical Offices and Regions.
(1) regional and (1) headquarters apprenticeship for breadth of experience.



Final Placement

Transition into permanent roles in Technical Offices and Regions following completion of the program.

Program Pillars

Publicly-Available NRAM
Information Can Be Found here



Mentorship & Community

- Formally established SES, Peer, and Technical mentors,
- Introductions to Commissioners and executive leadership, and a
- Strong bond created between cohort members.

Program Pillars

Publicly-Available NRAM
Information Can Be Found here



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Knowledge Transfer & Training

- Continued learning through trainings and qualifications,
- Periodic apprenticeship reports to cohort members, and
- Training to emphasize regulatory & technical competencies.

Program Pillars

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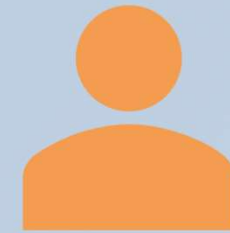
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Involvement & Engagement

- Project management, technical reviews, and inspection work,
- High visibility projects outside of normal job responsibilities, and a
- Group project to develop tools for knowledge management.

All Roads Lead to the Mission



The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation for the benefit of society and the environment.

My NRC Experience So Far...



Materials Rulemaking



Emergency Preparedness



Resident Inspection



Technical Review

Materials Rulemaking (NMSS - Student Co-Op)



- Independent Spent Fuel Storage Casks,
- Medical Events,
- NRC/DOT Regulation Harmonization,
- Agreement States,
- Financial Assurances for Decommissioning.

This introduced me to the regulatory process - how the NRC staff goes from problem identification to solution implementation. I also learned how we, as an agency, interact with other governmental organizations and the public to deliver our mission.

Emergency Preparedness (NSIR)



- Emergency Preparedness Exercises,
- NRC/FEMA Coordination,
- Integrated Public Alert and Warning System,
- Headquarters Operations Officers, and
- Community Outreach.

Here, I experienced how licensees execute the regulations and requirements the NRC sets for emergency preparedness. I saw how coordination between the private and public sectors can build public trust and assures safety.

Resident Inspection (Palisades, RIII)



- Reactor Oversight Process,
- Inspection and Enforcement,
- Licensing Operating vs. Decommissioning Plants,
- Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, and
- The Allegations Process.

With the Palisades Restart Team, I supported a first-of-a-kind effort to restart a previously decommissioned plant. I gained an in-depth knowledge of the cross-ties between licensing, oversight, and inspection. I also learned the importance of in-person community presence.

Technical Review (NRR)



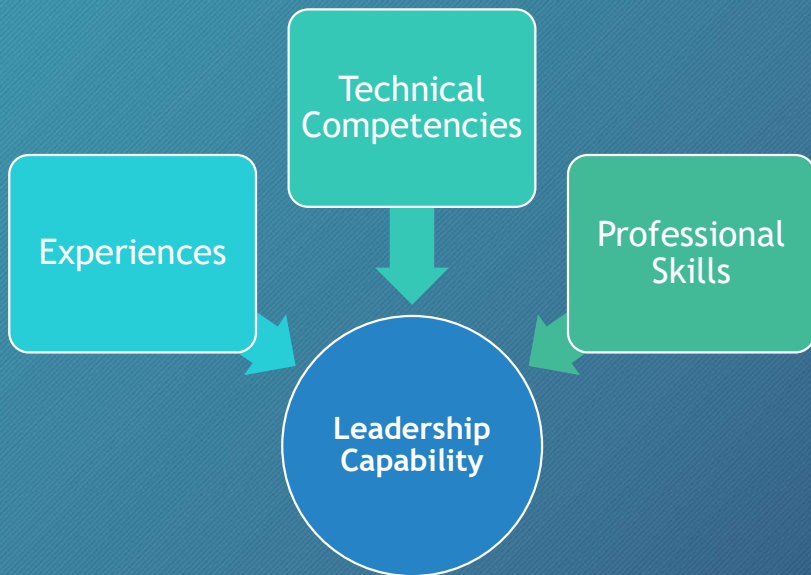
- Reactor Vessels and Internals,
- In-Vessel Inspections,
- ASME Codes and Standards,
- License Amendments, and
- Regional Support.

I learned the workflow of safety evaluations and the extensive effort that supports the NRC's decision-making process. I enjoyed this style of work and decided to pursue a permanent position as an advanced reactor technical reviewer.

What makes
this program
so valuable?



Leadership Development



The NRAN Program fast-tracks young professionals to become the agency leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you to everyone who supports this program.



Stand up!!!



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Thank you

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