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NRC Issues Construction Permit for Abilene Christian University Research Reactor in Texas

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a [Construction Permit](#) to Abilene Christian University to build its Molten Salt Research Reactor facility on the university's campus in Abilene, Texas.

“This is the first research reactor project we’ve approved for construction in decades, and the staff successfully worked with ACU to resolve several technical issues with this novel design,” said Andrea Veil, Director of the NRC’s Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. “Going forward, we’ll have inspectors on the ACU campus when construction gets started.”

The MSRR, which will not generate electricity, will use molten salt coolant with fuel dissolved in the salt. The facility will provide a platform to research molten-salt technology, as well as educational opportunities in nuclear science and engineering. The permit only authorizes construction; ACU will have to submit a separate application for an operating license in the future.

The NRC accepted ACU’s application to build the reactor and began the regulatory review in November 2022. ACU submitted updates in November 2023 and July 2024. The NRC issued its [final environmental assessment](#) for the site on March 7, and the [final safety evaluation](#) for the permit on September 16.