



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 00-028

February 22, 2000

NRC CONSIDERS CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS AND COMPONENTS AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS BASED ON SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is issuing an advance notice of proposed rulemaking to seek public comments on a proposal that would revise the regulatory controls for structures, systems and components (SSC's) at nuclear power plants based on their safety significance.

NRC regulations call for conservative safety margins, strict procedural controls and multiple safety systems to establish defense-in-depth for the protection of public health and safety. Special regulatory controls -- rigorous design qualifications, record-keeping, maintenance and testing requirements -- are used to ensure that SSC's necessary to safely shut down a nuclear reactor and prevent off-site releases function effectively during and after an accident.

Due to the evolving nature of nuclear reactor safety regulations, these requirements encompass a very broad scope of SSC's -- some of which are very important to safety; others of which, experience and new analytical techniques indicate, provide only minimal, or a negligible contribution to safety, thereby possibly focusing NRC staff and licensee resources on issues of minor safety significance.

The proposed changes use up-to-date analytic tools and risk insights, and further enhance plant safety by enabling nuclear power plant licensees to more precisely determine the safety significance of SSC's. If licensees chose to use the proposed alternative approach, some SSC's of "low safety significance" might only require normal industrial or commercial-grade regulatory controls. "Safety significant" SSC's may require additional regulatory controls. This would enable both nuclear power plant licensees and the NRC to more efficiently focus their resources on issues of greater safety significance, contributing to enhanced plant safety.

The proposed changes may amend Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 21 (Reporting of Defects and Noncompliance); Part 50 (Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities); Part 52 (Early Site Permits; Standard Design Certifications; and Combined Licenses for Nuclear Power Plants); Part 54 (Requirements for Renewal of Operating Licenses for Nuclear Power Plants) and Part 100 (Reactor Site Criteria). The NRC plans on holding a series of public meetings to discuss key technical issues raised by the proposed rulemaking.

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the proposed amendments within 75 days after publication of a *Federal Register* notice, expected shortly. The comments should be addressed to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, Attention: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff. Comments may also be submitted via the NRC's interactive rulemaking web site at <http://ruleforum.llnl.gov> .

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