



NRC NEWS

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NRC APPROVES FINAL RULE AMENDING SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission today approved a final rule that enhances its security regulations governing the design basis threat (DBT) – the latest in a series of actions addressing security at nuclear power plants. This rule, the first of several planned rules related to security, imposes generic security requirements similar to those previously imposed on operating nuclear power plants by the Commission’s April 29, 2003 DBT Orders. The new rule modifies and enhances the DBT based on experience and insights gained by the Commission during implementation of the Orders, and extensive consideration of the 12 factors specified in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

“This rule is an important piece, but only one piece, of a broader effort to enhance nuclear power plant security,” said NRC Chairman Dale Klein. “Overall we are taking a multi-faceted approach to security enhancements in this post 9/11 threat environment, and looking at how best to secure existing nuclear power plants and how to incorporate security enhancements into design features of new reactors that may be built in coming years.”

The final rule approved today is the first of several planned security-related rules that will enhance protection of nuclear power plants. Other rules being developed include proposals that would add security assessment requirements for new power reactor designs; proposals to revise and update requirements for physical protection at existing and new reactors; and proposals to establish how technical requirements, including those related to security, are to be examined in applications for NRC review of new reactor designs and operations.

Today’s final rule describes the design basis threat. This rule provides a general description of the attributes of potential adversaries who might attempt to commit radiological sabotage or theft or diversion against which licensees’ physical protection systems must defend with high assurance. Although the guidance documents related to this rule are protected from public disclosure for security reasons, the final rule provides a general description of the modes of attack, weaponry and capabilities and intentions of the adversary. For example, the final rule contains provisions related to multiple, coordinated groups of attackers, suicide attacks and cyber threats.

The rule does not incorporate the “beamhenge” concept proposed in 2004 in a Petition for Rulemaking by the Committee to Bridge the Gap and does not require protection against a deliberate hit by a large aircraft. The NRC has already required its licensees to take steps to mitigate the effects of large fires and explosions from any type of initiating event. The active protection against airborne

threats is addressed by other federal organizations, including the military. In addition, the NRC remains an active partner with other federal and state/local authorities in constant surveillance of the threat environment and will adjust regulatory actions or requirements if necessary.

The NRC asked the public to comment on a proposed revision of the DBT rule (10 CFR 73.1) in November 2005. These comments are thoroughly addressed in the final rule. The rule will become effective 30 days after issuance.

More information about the DBT, this rulemaking and security requirements for NRC licensees can be found at: <http://www.nrc.gov/security/post-911.html#faqs> .

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