



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 12-116

October 23, 2012

NRC AMENDS REGULATIONS ON DISTRIBUTION OF URANIUM AND THORIUM

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its regulations regarding the distribution and licensing of unenriched uranium and thorium (also known as source material).

A final rule approved today by the Commission will require specific licenses for the initial distribution of source material to exempt persons and certain general licensees. Such licenses would impose certain labeling and quality control requirements, as well as new reporting and recordkeeping requirements. The changes will affect manufacturers and importers of certain products containing uranium or thorium that may be used under exemption. Examples of these products include welding rods and gas mantles that contain thorium, and decorative glassware that contains uranium.

The rule also modifies the existing possession and use requirements for the general license to possess small quantities of source material. The previous NRC regulations allowed commercial and industrial firms, research, education and medical institutions, and federal, state and local government agencies to use and transfer up to 15 pounds of source material at any one time, and up to 150 pounds in any one calendar year. The final rule lowers those possession limits to 1.5 kilograms (3.3 pounds) at one time and 7 kilograms (15.4 pounds) per calendar year for source material in a dispersible form or being processed.

Possession limits are not changed for persons possessing source material in a solid, non-dispersible form (such as samples of depleted uranium metal), removing uranium from drinking water, or determining the concentration of uranium and thorium in a material at a laboratory.

The final rule also exempts certain lenses coated with source material from licensing, though the manufacturers, some of whom may currently be operating under a general license, will now require a specific license for the initial distribution of those lenses.

These new license requirements and possession limits are intended to help ensure the protection of public health and safety by ensuring that licensees safely possess source material and that the NRC has a better understanding of how much source material is being distributed annually.

A proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* on July 26, 2010, for public comment. The staff received 15 comment letters from ten parties; those comments are addressed in a *Federal Register* notice to be published once the final rule is reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget. The rule changes will be effective 90 days following publication. The rule approved by the Commission, SECY-12-0099, is available on the [NRC website](#).

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