

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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***NRC CERTIFIES WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC COMPANY'S
AP600 REACTOR DESIGN***

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has amended its regulations to certify the AP600 standard plant design developed by Westinghouse Electric Company. The certification is the third issued under the agency's new licensing process for standard design certification and is valid for 15 years.

The AP600 design is for a nuclear power plant that is capable of producing 600 megawatts of electricity. The plant, which can be assembled from modular components, features enhanced safety systems that rely on gravity and pressure differentials to safely shut down the reactor or mitigate the effects of an accident. It is designed for a 60-year operating life.

With the certification, a utility that wishes to build and operate a new nuclear power plant can choose to use the design and reference it in a license application. Safety issues within the scope of the certified design are not subject to litigation, although site-specific environmental impacts associated with building and operating the plant at a particular location are.

Applicants for a license can make plant-specific changes to portions of the AP600 standard design by following the procedures set out in the design certification rule. The applicant is required to maintain records of all such changes.

In the fall of 1998, the agency issued a final design approval for the Westinghouse AP600 plant, completing the staff's technical review of the application for design certification received in 1992. This step permitted the staff to begin the administrative, or rulemaking, phase.

No application for a license using the AP600 standard design has been filed with the agency.

This rule will become effective 30 days after publication in the Federal Register.

The public had been invited to submit comments on the proposed design certification rule, the AP600 design control document submitted by Westinghouse that was incorporated into the agency rule, and the environmental assessment of the AP600 design. Interested

parties also had the opportunity to request an informal hearing. No requests for hearings were received and the submitted comment was of a general nature.

For additional information on the design's certification, contact Jerry N. Wilson, at 301-415-3145, or e-mail: jnw@nrc.gov.

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