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NRC TO AMEND REGULATIONS REVISING PACIFIC SIERRA  
VSC-24 CASK SYSTEM ON APPROVED LIST

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking comments on amendments to its regulations that allow reactor licensees using the Pacific Sierra Nuclear Associates VSC-24 spent fuel storage cask -- under a general license and without site-specific approval -- to store burnable poison rod assemblies inside the cask.

A burnable poison rod assembly is a bundle of rods inserted into the reactor core during refueling. The assembly controls the radioactivity inside the reactor, and does not contain any nuclear material.

Because the Commission considers this fairly routine, and to streamline the rulemaking process, this action is proposed as a direct final rule. The direct final rule will become effective 75 days after publication in the Federal Register. However, if the agency receives significant adverse comments within 30 days, it will publish a notice withdrawing the accelerated rule and address the comments in a subsequent final rule.

Under this action, the agency's List of Approved Spent Fuel Storage Casks would be revised to incorporate an amendment to the VSC-24 certificate of compliance that would allow these rods to be removed during refueling and stored along with spent fuel in the VSC-24 spent fuel storage casks.

Any nuclear power reactor licensee can use NRC-approved cask designs to store spent fuel if they notify the NRC in advance, store the fuel under certain conditions, and meet requirements of the general license. The VSC-24 cask design was approved by the NRC in 1993. The NRC staff has determined that the amended VSC-24 cask system, when used in accordance with regulations, will assure adequate protection of public health and safety.

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the proposed amendment to Part 72 of the Commission's regulations. Comments should be submitted within 30 days after publication of the Federal Register notice on this subject, expected shortly. They should be addressed to: Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, Attn: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff. Comments may also be submitted via the NRC's internet rulemaking site at <http://ruleforum.llnl.gov>.

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