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***NRC REVISES ITS REGULATIONS  
FOR MAKING CHANGES TO LICENSED FACILITIES***

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending several sections of its rules that define the conditions under which nuclear power plants and facilities for independent storage of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste may make physical changes to their facilities or procedures, or conduct tests and experiments without prior NRC approval.

Current NRC regulations (Parts 50.59 and 72.48 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations) permit such licensees to make these changes and to conduct such tests if they do not present what the regulations call an "unreviewed safety question" or require a change in the technical specifications of the facility's license.

The rule change came about as the result of an NRC staff review of existing regulatory processes, directed by the Commission because of concerns about so-called "50.59" changes at some plants. The staff concluded from this review that, although existing regulations have generally given licensees needed flexibility, problems have arisen from differing rule interpretations by the NRC staff and the nuclear industry.

In drafting the changes, the NRC staff has considered public comments received in response to a proposed rule published last October. The amendments will clarify specifically which changes, tests or experiments require evaluation, and revise the criteria that determine when NRC approval is needed before such changes can be made. The rule also adds definitions for terms that have been subject to differing interpretations.

The new rule for Part 50 licensees will become effective 90 days following approval of final regulatory guidance. The implementation date will be established by a future *Federal Register* notice that will announce the availability of the guidance. For Part 72 facilities and certificate holders, the revised rule will become effective 18 months from publication of the rule in the *Federal Register*. A copy of the rule will be posted on the NRC homepage at: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/rule.html>.

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