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NRC PROPOSES TO EXTEND FITNESS-FOR-DUTY
REQUIREMENTS TO ADDITIONAL LICENSEES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to extend its fitness-for-duty requirements to licensees who possess, use or transport unirradiated formula quantities of strategic special nuclear material (Category I Material) as defined in the NRC's regulations.

As proposed, the amendments would provide greater assurance that employees who are granted unescorted access to, create or have access to safeguards records, make measurements of, transport or escort, or guard strategic special nuclear material do not have a drug or alcohol problem.

The requirements would not be applicable to spent fuel storage facility licensees or non-power-reactor licensees possessing, using or transporting formula quantities of irradiated strategic special nuclear material which are exempt, under the NRC's regulations, from Category I physical security requirements. Fitness-for-duty requirements already apply to licensees building or operating nuclear power plants.

Employees of Category I material licensees with drug or alcohol problems might be vulnerable to blackmail and, as a result, might participate or assist in acts of theft, sabotage or diversion of information or property, thus defeating existing physical security measures. In addition, workers with drug or alcohol problems could increase the risk of an accident due to neglect or error.

The proposed rule is intended to discourage and detect the abuse of alcohol or drugs on the part of employees of Category I material licensees by subjecting them to a chemical testing program, including random tests, and to correct such abuse through an employee assistance program.

Written comments on the proposed amendments to Parts 26, 70 and 73 of the Commission's regulations should be received by July 29, 1991. They should be addressed to the Secretary of the Commission, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555, Attention: Docketing and Service Branch. The Commission is particularly interested in having comments on which classes of workers should be exempt from a final rule.

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