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### NRC PROPOSES TO EXTEND DATE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH REVISED RADIATION PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to extend from January 1, 1993, to January 1, 1994, the date by which licensees must comply with revised radiation protection requirements.

The new requirements, which are primarily in Part 20 of the Commission's regulations, were approved by the Commission on December 13, 1990, published in the Federal Register on May 21, 1991, and became effective on June 20, 1991. Compliance with the revised requirements was optional beginning on the June 20 effective date and mandatory on January 1, 1993.

Highlights of the revisions are:

- Annual radiation exposures to individual members of the public from NRC-licensed activities are lowered to a limit of 0.1 rem per year, compared with the previous limit of 0.5 rem per year.
- The sum of internal and external doses to radiation workers is limited to 5 rem per year.
- NRC licensees are required to implement programs to ensure that all radiation doses are kept as low as is reasonably achievable. Most licensees already have such programs in place.
- A standard is established for protection of the embryo or fetus of female radiation workers that limits the exposure to 0.5 rem over the duration of the pregnancy, once the worker tells her employer about her pregnancy.
- Concentration limits for specific radioactive materials releasable to air and water have been updated to reflect new dose limits, dosimetry and metabolic data. Some decrease, some increase and others remain the same.

The revised requirements incorporate Federal guidance for radiation protection of workers in the nuclear industry issued by the President in 1987 and recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP).

The revisions will provide a substantial increase in the overall protection of public health and safety. However, in approving the proposed extension of time for compliance, the Commission noted that current practices, including the philosophy of keeping radiation exposures as low as is reasonably achievable, generally have kept radiation exposures well below the limits in the current regulations.

When the Commission approved these new requirements on December 13, 1990, it anticipated that licensees would have two full years to achieve compliance by January 1, 1993. However, difficulties with publication of the rule in the Federal Register delayed its issuance for five months.

Also, the Commission anticipated--when it set the January 1, 1993, required implementation date--that the NRC staff would issue regulatory guides to provide guidance on methods acceptable to the NRC for complying with the revised rules. The Commission recognized that the incorporation of many new concepts into Part 20 would require additional guidance and explanation of their application to practical problems in radiation protection.

These guides have not all been completed and will not be available in final form one year before the January 1, 1993, implementation date as the Commission had planned. By extending the required implementation date of the revised Part 20 to January 1, 1994, final regulatory guidance should be available at least one year before required implementation of the revised Part 20.

When the Commission issued the revised Part 20, it asked the "Agreement States," which are the 29 states that regulate certain radioactive material users under agreement with the NRC, to proceed as quickly as possible to conform to the revised requirements, and to require their licensees to comply by January 1, 1994. An extension of the deadline to January 1, 1994, for NRC licensees would provide a consistent and uniform date for implementation by all licensees and eliminate the period during which Agreement States could still be enforcing the old Part 20 while NRC would be requiring adherence to the revised Part 20.

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the proposed revisions of Part 20 to extend the implementation date to January 1, 1994. The comments should be sent by June 18, 1992, to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555, Attention: Docketing and Services Branch.

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