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NRC ESTABLISHES SPECIAL TASK GROUP  
TO EXAMINE POWER REACTOR REGULATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has established a Regulatory Review Group to conduct a comprehensive examination of regulations, guidance and inspection processes used in regulating power reactor licensees.

A number of special regulatory reviews have been conducted by the NRC staff in the past that resulted in changes to some requirements that were considered marginal to safety. This new Review Group will conduct a far-reaching re-examination of power reactor regulations and practices that contribute significantly to public health and safety, emphasizing the Commission's goal of performance orientation in its regulations.

At the completion of its six-month review, the Review Group will submit a report that identifies existing reactor requirements, regulatory guidance and staff licensing/inspection processes which should be eliminated, revised or further evaluated with public health and safety as a paramount consideration. The report's findings also will contain recommendations on how and under what limitations risk assessment could be used in the regulation of power reactors.

The Review Group will periodically meet separately in public sessions with the NRC Commissioners, NRC staff, power reactor licensees, industry representatives (such as the Nuclear Management & Resources Council--NUMARC), the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards and the general public. A public meeting is scheduled with NUMARC from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on February 16 at NRC Headquarters, 11555 Rockville Pike, Room 4B11, in Rockville, MD. From 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., the Review Group will take comments and questions from the general public on the scope and purpose of the group and how it intends to meet the goals of its charter.

The leader of the eight-member Review Group is Frank Gillespie, NRC's Director, Program Management Policy Development & Analysis Staff, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. Overall direction and guidance for the Review Group is being provided by

James H. Snizek, Deputy Executive Director for Nuclear Reactor Regulation, Regional Operations and Research.

Major tasks that will be performed by the Review Group include:

- a series of meetings to obtain views on areas of redundant regulation, overly burdensome regulations, overly prescriptive regulatory guidance, and regulations or guidance that may be ambiguous;
- an assessment of regulations that will provide an evaluation of each major section and statements of consideration and the extent to which they should be revised or examined to provide increased flexibility in plant operations without impacting operational safety;
- an assessment of NRC guidance to licensees to determine how a regulation is applied in the licensing and inspection process and how its implementation makes the rule more restrictive than envisioned by the rule itself;
- an assessment of selected operating licenses to determine how much flexibility licensees have in making changes to their plant or operations and what in the licensing process restricts flexibility once it is incorporated into the license;
- examine how risk assessment techniques can be used to provide more flexibility in regulations and determine what types of rules or restrictions would be necessary to sustain broad use of risk assessment as an accepted tool while maintaining the current level of safety.