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NRC ISSUES FINAL REGULATIONS ON PROCURING SAFETY-RELATED ITEMS
FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued final regulations regarding the procurement of items to be used for safety-related purposes in nuclear power plants. The regulations were published in the Federal Register for public comment last October.

The new regulations clarify the process for procuring "commercial-grade items" for safety-related applications. The process also ensures this is done in a manner that avoids unnecessary delay and expense while maintaining an adequate level of plant safety.

The regulations contain the following provisions:

- an expanded definition of "commercial-grade items;"
- a more flexible process allowing "dedication" by licensees or third parties which will ensure the item will perform its intended safety function, in addition to quality assurance programs of manufacturers and licensees;
- clarification that the entity performing the "dedication" is responsible for discovering, evaluating, and reporting any deficiencies.

The regulations responded, in part, to an October 1993 Petition for Rulemaking received from the Nuclear Management and Resources Council, now incorporated into the Nuclear Energy Institute, a trade association.

The petition contended that many of the original manufacturers and suppliers of components of nuclear power plants no longer have quality assurance programs that meet the requirements of Appendix B to Part 50 because they are expensive to implement and maintain, particularly in light of the diminishing demand for such items. The petition also contended that, because the market for safety-related components for nuclear power plants is small, many other vendors are unwilling

to develop and maintain evaluation and notification procedures that meet Part 21 requirements. Therefore, it is difficult for licensees to procure items and services for safety-related applications in their facilities.

The regulations will become final 30 days after their publication in the September 19 edition of the Federal Register.

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