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NRC PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS
GOVERNING SAFETY OF RADIOGRAPHY OPERATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its regulations governing the safety of radiography operations to further enhance the safety of radiographers and the public and to provide licensees with a better understanding of what is expected in radiography operations.

Radiography involves the use of radioactive materials to produce shadow images on film. The NRC has approximately 200 radiography licensees, and the 29 Agreement States (states which have assumed, by agreement, part of the NRC's regulatory authority) have an additional 500 licensees. Both NRC and Agreement State licensees often conduct business under both NRC and Agreement State jurisdiction.

The radiography regulations first were promulgated in 1965 and numerous modifications have been made since that time, the most recent in 1990 when requirements governing the performance of radiography equipment and additional reporting requirements governing equipment malfunctions were added.

As proposed, the new amendments, which have been coordinated with the Agreement States and are responsive to a 1992 petition for rulemaking from the International Union of Operating Engineers, would, among other things:

-- require that two radiographers, or a radiographer and a radiographer's assistant, be present any time radiographic operations are conducted outside of a permanent radiographic installation, which would provide a significant increase in assurance that operational safety measures and emergency procedures would be implemented effectively;

-- require that radiographers, in addition to meeting the existing training and qualification requirements, be certified by a certifying entity, which could be either an independent certifying organization or an Agreement State;

-- change the definition of "permanent radiographic installation" to be an enclosed shielded room, cell or vault in which radiography is performed, which should reduce any ambiguity as to what the term is intended to mean; in addition, a requirement for a daily check of visible and audible alarm signals would be added;

-- add a requirement to provide additional training for radiographers' assistants; instead of just receiving copies of the licensees' operating and emergency procedures and being tested on those documents, assistants would have to receive additional training to ensure that they are knowledgeable in regard to all pertinent NRC requirements; and

-- specify the duties of the radiation safety officer and require additional training for this position.

Written comments on the proposed amendments to Part 34 of the Commission's regulations should be received by May 25, 1994. They should be addressed to the Secretary of the Commission, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555, Attention; Docketing and Service Branch.

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