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NRC REVISES PHYSICAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS
FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its physical protection regulations for operating nuclear power plants. The amendments modify the design basis threat for radiological sabotage to include the use of land vehicles by adversaries for transporting personnel, hand-carried equipment and explosives.

Nuclear power plant licensees are required to implement a system that protects against acts of radiological sabotage, and specifically against the design basis threat for radiological sabotage as set out in the Commission's regulations.

Based on current information derived by continually monitoring and evaluating the worldwide threat environment and briefings by various government intelligence agencies, the NRC has concluded that there is no indication of an actual vehicle threat against the domestic commercial nuclear industry. However, based on the unauthorized intrusion at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, the NRC believes that a vehicle intrusion or bomb threat to a nuclear power plant could develop without warning in the future.

Licensees will therefore be required to establish control measures to protect the facility from use of a vehicle to gain unauthorized proximity to vital areas. They will also be required to assess whether the measures taken to protect against vehicle intrusion provide protection against a vehicle bomb consistent with design goals and criteria specified by the Commission. Licensees who cannot demonstrate that they fully meet the Commission's design goal for protection against a vehicle bomb will have the option of proposing alternative measures for protection against this threat.

Programs of licensees who are in the process of decommissioning or are contemplating decommissioning in the near future will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the NRC to

determine if full or partial exemption from the new rule is appropriate.

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A proposed rule on this subject was published in the Federal Register for public comment on November 4, 1993. The NRC also held a public meeting on this topic on May 10, 1993, and received comments from its Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. As a result of the comments received, the schedule for implementing the new requirements has been revised. Licensees authorized to operate a nuclear power plant will be required (1) to submit within 180 days (versus 90 days in the proposed rule) of the effective date of the final rule a summary description of the proposed vehicle control measures and the results of their cost-benefit analysis and (2) to fully implement the required vehicle control measures or the site-specific alternative measures as approved by the Commission within 18 months (versus 360 days in the proposed rule) of the effective date of the final rule.

The NRC is also providing additional details to licensees and making a change to design criteria that were originally provided to them and protected as safeguards information.

The revised regulations will be effective 30 days after publication of a Federal Register notice.