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Tel. 301\415-8200

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NRC PROPOSES TO AMEND REQUIREMENTS GOVERNING PROCUREMENT OF  
SAFETY-RELATED ITEMS FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its requirements governing procurement of items to be used for safety-related purposes in nuclear power plants. As proposed the amendments would clarify and add flexibility to the process of procuring "commercial-grade items" for safety-related applications. They also seek to assure this could be done in a way that avoids unnecessary delay and expense while maintaining an adequate level of plant safety.

Such items can be procured in one of two ways: (1) as a "basic component" from a manufacturer or supplier which has a quality assurance program meeting the requirements of Appendix B to Part 50 of the Commission's regulations; or (2) as a "commercial-grade item" subject to a "dedication" program designed to assure it will perform its intended safety function.

The proposed amendments to Part 21 of the Commission's regulations respond, 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 contends that many of the original manufacturers and suppliers of components for 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 contends that, because the market for safety-related components for nuclear power plants is relatively small, many other vendors are unwilling to develop and maintain evaluation and notification procedures that meet Part 21 requirements. Therefore, it is becoming difficult for licensees to procure an increasing number of items and services for safety-related applications in their facilities.

The proposed amendments contain the following provisions:

-- expanded definition of "commercial-grade items";

-- a more flexible process allowing "dedication" by licensees or third parties in addition to quality assurance programs of manufacturers and licensees;

-- clarification that the entity performing the "dedication" is responsible for Part 21 compliance.

Written comments on the proposed amendments to Part 21 of the Commission's regulations should be received by January 9, 1995. 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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