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NRC PROPOSES TO CHANGE TIME LIMITS FOR
MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS OF MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its regulations governing monitoring programs to evaluate the effectiveness of maintenance programs at licensed nuclear power plants. The proposed amendment would modify the time interval for conducting evaluations from once every year to at least once every refueling cycle with the maximum amount of time between evaluations not to exceed 24 months.

The proposed amendment would be consistent with an earlier amendment to the NRC's requirements where the frequency of required power-reactor licensee reports updating Final Safety Analysis Reports was modified from annually to once per refueling cycle. In that case, the Commission found that the use of a fuel-cycle interval provided a more coordinated and cohesive update since a majority of design changes and major modifications were performed during refueling outages.

In addition, officials of the Nuclear Management Resources Council (NUMARC) suggested, in a public meeting with the NRC staff in February 1992, that the NRC should consider assessments of maintenance program effectiveness based on a refueling cycle rather than an annual interval. The NUMARC officials pointed out that:

-- assessment data collected during a refueling cycle would be more meaningful as some important data can be obtained only from surveillance tests performed with the reactor shutdown during a refueling outage;

-- adjustments to maintenance activities that may be made after such an evaluation would typically be performed after a refueling outage; and

-- the evaluation is a time-consuming process; that the insufficient data available on an annual basis would not provide for meaningful evaluations by licensees; and that annual evaluations would be difficult for utilities which own multi-unit sites having common or shared equipment.

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Written comments on the proposed amendments to Part 50 of the Commission's regulations should be received by May 6, 1993. 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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