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NRC PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS
ON RENEWAL OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANT LICENSES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its regulations governing the renewal of operating nuclear power plant licenses. The changes are aimed at providing a more stable and predictable regulatory process for license renewal. They would give more credit to existing licensee maintenance programs by narrowing the number of systems, structures and components to be reviewed during the license renewal process.

Operating licenses are issued for up to 40 years and may be renewed for an additional 20 years if NRC requirements are met. So far, no operating plants have reached the end of their initial 40-year license, and none have applied for license renewal.

The overall regulatory philosophy of the rule would continue to address issues relevant to current plant operation within the initial license term, rather than deferring them until the time of renewal. Therefore, the focus of the license renewal review will be on the management of the deleterious effects of aging resulting from operation beyond the initial license term.

The proposed changes to the regulation include:

(1) Deletion of the term "age-related degradation unique to license renewal."

(2) Replacement of the definition of "systems, structures and components important to license renewal" with a section that defines the set of plant systems, structures and components that would be within the scope of license renewal reviews. They are:

- Safety-related systems, structures and components that are relied on to remain functional during and following events (such as loss of off-site power and hurricanes) in order to ensure (a) the integrity of the reactor coolant pressure boundary, (b) the capability to shut down the reactor and maintain it in a safe shutdown condition and (c) the capability to prevent or mitigate the consequences of accidents that could result in potential off-site radiation exposures comparable to those in the Commission's reactor siting criteria regulations.

- Non-safety-related systems, structures and components whose failure could prevent satisfactory accomplishment of any of the functions described above.
- Systems, structures and components relied on to demonstrate compliance with the Commission's regulations for protection against fires, loss of on-site and off-site power and certain other occurrences.

(3) Revision of the requirements for the integrated plant assessment that must be submitted with the license renewal application. This revised assessment will give greater credit to existing license programs and identify which of the above structures and components will be subject to an aging management review. For each of these identified structures and components, the renewal applicant would be required to demonstrate that the effects of aging will be managed so that the intended function of the system, structure or component will be adequately maintained for the period of extended operation.

Additional details of the proposed revisions are contained in a Federal Register notice published on September 9. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555, Attention: Docketing and Service Branch by December 8.

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