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NRC ISSUES DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT
ON PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES FROM RETALIATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued, for public comment, a Draft Policy Statement which clearly states the Commission's expectation that its licensees will ensure freedom for all employees to raise safety concerns, both to their management and to the NRC, without fear of retaliation.

The Draft Policy Statement results from a 1993 reassessment of the NRC's program for protecting employees against retaliation which was undertaken after questions had been raised about the effectiveness of the agency's efforts up to that time. Several recommendations resulting from that reassessment addressed the need to encourage responsible licensee actions with regard to developing a quality-conscious environment in which to raise safety concerns.

As drafted, the Policy Statement recognizes that NRC licensees have the primary responsibility for assuring that their nuclear operations are conducted safely and that the identification and communication of potential safety concerns and the freedom of employees to raise such concerns is an integral part of carrying out that responsibility.

The Policy Statement, when issued in final form, would be applicable to NRC licensees as well as their contractors, subcontractors and employees.

The Draft Policy Statement addresses effective processes for problem identification and resolution by licensees and their contractors and subcontractors; improving contractors awareness of their responsibilities; the involvement of senior management in cases of alleged discrimination; and responsibilities of employees.

It concludes by pointing out that, if a licensee does not maintain an environment in which employees are free to raise concerns without retaliation, appropriate enforcement action can and will be taken against the licensee, its contractors and

involved individual supervisors. It also notes that the Commission does not expect the Policy Statement will insulate

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all employees from retaliation or remove all personal cost should an employee seek a personal remedy but does expect it should improve the environment for raising safety concerns.

Written comments on the Draft Policy Statement should be received by April 10, 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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