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NRC ISSUES GUIDANCE FOR COMMENT ON PROTECTIVE ACTIONS DURING
SEVERE ACCIDENTS AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have published for interim use and comment a draft document calling for prompt evacuation, rather than sheltering, in the event of a severe accident at a nuclear power plant.

The guidance — intended for nuclear utilities and state and local government agencies — applies only to situations in which a severe reactor accident has occurred, that is, one involving actual or potential core damage and the release of radionuclides into the atmosphere. The document, Draft Supplement 3 to NUREG-0654/FEMA-REP-1, Rev.1, Criteria for Protective Actions for Severe Accidents, is available for interim use, review, and comment for 90 days.

During the first few hours of a severe accident at a nuclear power plant, critical decisions must be made concerning actions to best protect the public. Earlier NRC/FEMA guidance, issued in 1980, recommended sheltering the population closest to the plant, while authorities considered advising evacuation.

Since then, subsequent studies have indicated that prompt evacuation of the area near the plant is much more effective in reducing the risk of adverse health effects. Sheltering is still considered a suitable protective action for certain limited situations, such as hazardous travel conditions or controlled, short term releases of radioactivity.

A description of the draft report was published in the August 26 edition of the Federal Register. Comments should be submitted to: Chief, Rules Review and Directives Branch, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mail Stop T-6D59, Washington, DC, 20555-0001. Comments may also be delivered to 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, between the hours of 7:45 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. on federal workdays.

Copies of the document may be obtained by writing to:
Distribution Services, Printing and Mail Services Branch, Office
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