United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC CONSIDERS REVISIONS TO CRITERIA FOR REPORTING ABNORMAL OCCURRENCES TO CONGRESS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering revising the criteria used to determine which events at licensed nuclear facilities will be included in its periodic abnormal occurrence report to Congress.

The revisions would better define which events reported by licensees are significant and need to be reported to Congress. They would also make the criteria consistent with recent changes in NRC regulations. In addition, the proposed criteria would be based on more specific reporting thresholds to permit easier and more consistent evaluation of events.

The Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 requires the Commission to submit the abnormal occurrence report to Congress. The Act defines an abnormal occurrence as an unscheduled incident or event that the Commission has determined to be significant from the standpoint of public health and safety. For each occurrence, the report must contain the date and place, the nature and probable consequence, the cause or causes, and any action taken to prevent recurrence.

In July 1975, the Commission developed interim criteria for determining which unscheduled events are reportable as abnormal occurrences. Based on these criteria, which have been revised several times, the Commission has reported abnormal occurrences quarterly to Congress since October 1975. Each report, which is available to the public, includes the criteria in an appendix.

Details of the proposed abnormal occurrence reporting criteria are contained in a Federal Register notice published on January 9.

Examples of incidents that would be reported to Congress under the proposed criteria include:

(1) An unintended dose to an adult of 25 rem or more during a one-year period. (Under NRC regulations, the permissible dose limits are 5 rem per year for workers and 0.1 rem per year for members of the public.)

(2) An unintended medical administration that exceeds limits set out in the criteria and represents either a dose that is at least 50 percent greater than the dose prescribed, or a prescribed dose that is (a) the wrong radiopharmaceutical, (b) delivered by the wrong route of administration, (c) delivered to the wrong treatment site, (d) delivered by the wrong treatment mode, or (e) from a leaking radioactive source.

Interested individuals are invited to submit written comments on the proposed abnormal occurrence criteria to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555, Attention: Docketing and Service Branch. The comments should be received by April 8.

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