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NRC PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO PHYSICAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS  
FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its physical protection regulations for operating nuclear power plants. The amendments would modify the design basis threat for radiological sabotage to include the use of land vehicles by adversaries for transporting personnel, hand-carried equipment and explosives.

Nuclear power plant licensees are required to implement a system that protects against acts of radiological sabotage, and specifically against the design basis threat for radiological sabotage as set out in the Commission's regulations.

Based on current information derived by continually monitoring and evaluating the worldwide threat environment and briefings by various government intelligence agencies, the NRC has concluded that there is no indication of an actual vehicle threat against the domestic commercial nuclear industry. However, based on the recent bombing of the World Trade Center and the unauthorized intrusion at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, the NRC believes that a vehicle intrusion or bomb threat to a nuclear power plant could develop without warning in the future.

To maintain a prudent margin between the current threat estimate (low) and the design basis threat (postulated as higher for conservatism), the NRC is proposing to amend its regulations to modify the design basis threat for radiological sabotage to include protection against malevolent use of vehicles at nuclear power plants.

The proposed amendments, which are to Part 73 of the Commission's regulations, would include--within the design basis threat that licensees are required to protect against--the use of a four-wheel-drive land vehicle for the transport of personnel, hand-carried equipment or explosives. The amendments would provide a process to allow for alternative measures to protect against sabotage.

Licensees would be required to establish vehicle control measures to protect the facility from use of a land vehicle to gain unauthorized proximity to vital area barriers. They would also be required to assess whether the measures taken to protect against vehicle intrusion provide protection against a vehicle bomb consistent with design goals and criteria specified by the Commission. Licensees who could not demonstrate that they fully meet the Commission's design goal for protection against a vehicle bomb would have the option of proposing alternative measures for protection against this threat.

Programs of licensees who are in the process of decommissioning or are contemplating decommissioning in the near future would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the NRC to determine if full or partial exemption from the new rule is appropriate.

The rule calls for licensees authorized to operate a nuclear power plant (1) to submit (within 90 days of the effective date of the final rule) a summary description of the proposed vehicle control measures and the results of their cost-benefit analysis and (2) to fully implement the required vehicle control measures or the site-specific alternative measures as approved by the Commission within 360 days of the effective date of the final rule.

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the proposal to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555, Attention: Docketing and Services Branch. The comments should be submitted by January 3, 1994 (60 days following publication of a Federal Register notice).

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