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No. 96-179
RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE

(Friday, December 6,

1996)

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION CERTIFIES TWO
STANDARDIZED REACTOR DESIGNS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved rules that will certify two evolutionary reactor designs, the ASEA Brown Boveri-Combustion Engineering System 80+ and General Electric Nuclear Energy's Advanced Boiling Water Reactor.

In an affirmation vote today, the Commission approved with some changes proposed regulations submitted by the staff earlier this year. The NRC staff will now prepare rules which are expected to be published in the Federal Register early next year.

In the past, reactor designs were generally approved by the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation as part of the licensing process for a specific plant rather than by rulemaking. The new process gives industry an option to seek approval by rulemaking for a generic reactor design.

Use of a standardized reactor design would permit a utility to apply for a combined license in place of the historical two-step process involving separate proceedings at both the construction permit and operating license stages.

The Advanced Boiling Reactor and the System 80+ designs are for nuclear power facilities which would be capable of producing about 1300 megawatts of electricity, slightly more power than the largest reactors in use by industry today.

Designs for the two plants were received by the NRC in 1987 and NRC staff completed its technical review in 1994, issuing Final Design Approvals. On April 7, 1995, NRC published two proposed rules for certification of the U.S. Advanced Boiling Water Reactor and the System 80+ designs, and the environmental assessments for each design. NRC invited public comment on the proposed rules and environmental assessments, and provided an opportunity to request an informal hearing before an Atomic Safety & Licensing Board.

In addition, NRC conducted a series of public meetings for the purpose of clarifying the provisions of the rules and affording the public opportunity for comments. The official comment period ended August 7, 1995 and NRC did not receive any requests for an informal hearing or comments on the environmental assessments.