



# **NRC NEWS**

## **U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. 00-105

July 6, 2000

### **NRC ISSUES PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR INCLUDING INDUSTRY INITIATIVES IN REGULATORY PROCESS**

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is issuing for public comment proposed guidelines for the use of initiatives proposed by nuclear power plant licensees and other stakeholders in the regulatory process. The proposed guidelines are aimed at ensuring that proposed initiatives will be treated and evaluated in a consistent and controlled manner that is visible and open to stakeholders, as well as to ensure that safety is maintained and that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Two types of industry initiatives are addressed by the proposed guidelines. Type 1 initiatives are those developed by licensees or industry in response to an issue of potential regulatory concern to either substitute for or complement regulatory actions to meet regulatory requirements. For example, the Boiling Water Reactor Vessel Internals Project, in which all boiling water reactor licensees participate, was begun in 1994 to address the potential consequences of stress corrosion cracking in a boiling water reactor. This industry program led to about 50 generic industry guidelines for inspection scope and frequency, flaw evaluation, and mitigation and repair.

Type 1 initiatives also deal with cost-beneficial safety enhancements for which there are no existing regulatory requirements, such as Nuclear Energy Institute guidelines provided to licensees to address reactor shutdown risks.

Type 2 initiatives are those that address issues that are outside existing regulatory requirements and are not cost-beneficial safety enhancements or that are used as an information-gathering mechanism. An example would be industry's development of site access authorization procedures for screening members of the public, contractors, employees, and others visiting the plant.

The guidelines would provide a structured framework for the NRC staff to process issues from the beginning through final resolution. An NRC decision would be made whether or not to pursue the issue, followed by an NRC decision on whether to accept a proposed industry initiative to resolve the issue. If the industry proposal is accepted, the agency would then publish a *Federal Register* notice and develop a communications plan for keeping the general public and other stakeholders informed of progress and encouraging public input. Depending on the nature of the particular issue involved, if resolution cannot be reached with the industry a generic letter or a change to the Commission's regulations could be required.

The proposed guidelines also contain enforcement guidelines for licensee activities that result from industry initiatives. For instance, in Type 1 initiatives, if a licensee does not implement activities consistent with the applicable requirements, NRC enforcement is an option. For Type 2 initiatives, no agency or enforcement action is expected.

A copy of the proposed guidelines will be available at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/REACTOR/VII/index.html>.

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