



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 01-082

July 6, 2001

NRC TO BEGIN ONE-YEAR EVALUATION OF A REVISED PROGRAM TO ASSESS PHYSICAL SECURITY AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is beginning a one-year pilot of the Safeguards Performance Assessment (SPA) program, a process by which a power-reactor licensee tests the effectiveness of key elements of its physical security program.

The pilot program will also allow NRC to evaluate concepts being considered for proposed revisions to NRC regulations. It will also be used to determine if the SPA has merit as a possible replacement for the Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation (OSRE), the current NRC program to assess physical security at nuclear power plants.

The SPA program provides for:

- development of "target sets," equipment essential for safe operations of a reactor, as the basis for a licensee's physical security measures;
- participation by each security shift in a minimum of one annual licensee-evaluated drill to demonstrate proficiency for key security personnel;
- quarterly drills; and
- participation in an NRC-evaluated exercise every 3 years to test the licensee's ability to protect target sets from mock acts of sabotage.

On a case-by-case basis, licensees who volunteer to participate in the SPA pilot may be exempt from an OSRE. However, NRC baseline inspections under the reactor oversight program will continue to assess licensees' ability to protect themselves from malevolent acts. NRC will continue to conduct OSREs at sites not participating in the SPA pilot program until its evaluation of SPA is completed and the Commission determines whether it is an acceptable alternative to OSRE.

Under the SPA program, full-scale force-on-force exercises would be conducted at each nuclear power plant every three years, exceeding the frequency of the OSRE program, which provides for an NRC assessment of each plant's security programs every eight years. Like OSRE, the SPA program includes

provisions to address deficiencies identified through drills and exercises within the licensee's corrective action program.

NRC will choose eight volunteers from those plants that have agreed to participate in the pilot program. This evaluation is part of an ongoing effort by NRC to identify more efficient and effective ways to assess security at nuclear power plants.

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