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OFFICE OF SECRETARY
 RULEMAKINGS AND
 ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Rulemaking Communications Improvements

SUMMARY: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is seeking comments and recommendations from all interested persons regarding options for improving NRC communications with the public on agency rulemaking activities.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The NRC currently communicates with the public about rulemaking activities in a number of ways. The agency notices all rulemaking actions in the Federal Register, and invites the public to comment on noticed actions via mail, hand delivery, or by uploading a file to the agency's RuleForum Web site (<http://ruleforum.llnl.gov>). The RuleForum site contains extensive information on both specific rulemakings under development and general rulemaking activities, and allows visitors to read comments submitted to the NRC by other members of the public. Documents related to rulemaking through the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System activities, including public comments, can also be accessed online (ADAMS) at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>.

In addition, the NRC's Public Document Room (PDR), located at the agency's headquarters in Rockville, MD, is open to the public on all Federal work days. Occasionally, the agency conducts meetings or workshops related to specific rulemakings, events which are publicized in the Federal Register and on the NRC's home page (<http://www.nrc.gov>).

As part of an ongoing effort to improve stakeholder satisfaction with the way the NRC communicates with the public, the agency is considering enhancements to its current methods of informing the public about rulemaking activities and to encourage public participation in the rulemaking process. To support this endeavor, the NRC is requesting comment on its rulemaking communications process. Comment is requested on, but need not be limited to, the topics below:

- (1) In addition to the use of the Federal Register and the NRC rulemaking Web site, what other forums would be effective in informing the public about rulemaking activities?--e.g., e-Mail, mailing lists, announcements on related Web sites, public meetings, or other suggestions.

Comment: All activities that impact an individual license holder (i.e., NRC Licensed Senior Reactor Operator or Reactor Operator) be communicated with direct correspondence to the Professional Reactor Operator Society (PROS). This could be done through linked announcements to the PROS website. PROS is a not-for profit volunteer organization that has as its plenary membership NRC Licensed Reactor Operators. Independent of any support other than that of its membership and other activities to raise funds to support the organization, the Society does not receive funds from utilities and can retain its independence and focus on its primary Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of PROS includes but not limited to:

- Exchange of technical information concerning operation practices, Operator Training, and individual license regulation.
- Meet with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to provide Operator viewpoints and input on related topics.
- Give voice to our members' professional ideas.

- (2) The general process used by the public to provide comments on rulemakings published in the Federal Register is to either mail the comments to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory

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Commission or use the NRC's interactive rulemaking Web site. In addition, public meetings are occasionally used for obtaining public comments for some rulemakings. Are there any other methods that might be used to facilitate public comments on rulemaking activities?

Comment: The NRC continued support of advanced communication that allows participation in meeting via phone-bridge or other electronic media is highly encouraged. This allows PROS and other organizations to participate with minimal financial impact to the organization.

- (4) At what stage(s) of the rulemaking process is interaction with the public most effective and beneficial?--e.g., at the beginning of the process before a rulemaking plan has been approved; shortly after a rulemaking plan has been approved; shortly before issuing a proposed rule; during the public comment period; or after a rulemaking has been proposed to the public and comments have been received and assessed but before the final rule has been approved?

Comment: The onset of the rulemaking process provides the most benefit of feedback. This provides comments PROS members with the chance for initial communication, feedback response, evaluation, and approval by PROS Executive Staff. Additionally, though, the period shortly before issuing a proposed rule is an ideal time to incorporate any PROS input that could preclude future challenges.

- (5) What method of public interaction on rulemaking activities is preferred?--e.g., Federal Register notice; posting draft rule language on the Web; meetings; or other suggestions?

Comment: Direct communications with PROS concerning rulemaking that directly effects NRC Licensed Operators will provide adequate time for discovery, evaluation, and member communications.

- (6) How useful are public meetings for communicating NRC rulemaking activities to all stakeholders?
- A. Are there occasions where public meetings are important in conducting rulemaking activities?

Comment: Workshops for issues that directly impact the NRC Licensed Operator provides a forum for an independent view of issues.

- B. For those that consider public meetings on rulemaking activities an important part of the process, at what stage of the rulemaking process would meetings be most beneficial and effective?--e.g., at the beginning of the process before a rulemaking plan has been approved; shortly after a rulemaking plan has been approved; shortly before issuing a proposed rule; during the public comment period; or after a rulemaking has been proposed to the public and comments have been received and assessed but before the final rule has been approved?

Comment: Prior to rulemaking provides the best forum for rulemaking. Public meetings before issuing a proposed rule provides for uniform

implementation.

- (7) Are published responses to public comments on proposed rules generally comprehensive, clearly written, and well-argued?
- (8) How useful is the initiative by the NRC to place draft rulemaking language on the NRC Web site with or without the associated statement of considerations?

Comment: The NRC Web Site should be used to place draft information and progress of the rule. This provides a uniform public input throughout the process.

- (9) How can the NRC obtain better information and comments on the cost or benefit of a rulemaking under development--i.e., information used to create a regulatory analysis?
- (10) Is the NRC's typical 75-day comment period for proposed rules sufficient?

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 23rd day of May, 2002.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

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