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NRC STAFF ISSUES GENERIC LETTER ON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT CONTROL ROOM HABITABILITY ISSUES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a Generic Letter asking all nuclear power plant licensees for information on control room habitability.

Systems to maintain control room habitability ensure that plant operators can remain safe and take necessary actions to control the reactor and shut it down, if necessary. One important factor in habitability is the control room's integrity, and recent improved testing methods have shown the rooms are not as leak-tight as first thought. The known deficiencies, however, have either been repaired or controlled by compensatory measures, and therefore do not adversely affect public health and safety.

The Letter has three main objectives:

- 1) Alert addressees to relevant findings on the issue;
- 2) Emphasize the importance of testing to verify control room habitability; and
- 3) Request and collect information that demonstrates control rooms meet regulatory requirements, and that measures are in place to maintain that compliance.

Licensees have 180 days to respond to the Letter. A draft letter was published for comment in the Federal Register on May 9, 2002, and responses were incorporated into the final document. Several public meetings and workshops have also provided stakeholders with opportunities to comment on the issue. The NRC's Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards reviewed the Generic Letter in April. The Generic Letter will be available electronically on the NRC's web site at this address:

<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/gen-comm/gen-letters/> .

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