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General Comment

y reading these regulations, by first thought was "why would a nuclear power plant in Oklahoma need the same amount of protection as a nuclear power plant in Alaska" (because of the wide difference in likelihood of a tornado hitting either one of these two plants. If a tornado is more likely to occur in Oklahoma, then the standards should be higher in Oklahoma, so my original line of thinking went.

However, after increased thought and a further examination of the regulatory requirement and staff positions on the protection of tornado missiles, my thoughts have changed. From my understanding, these regulations are setting the bare minimum that any plant would need to withstand a tornado and/or a tornado missile (which I didn't even know existed, but now I have another thing to be concerned about). It makes good sense to have this minimum requirement, especially since the requirement seems to have been well thought out and to have considered all the other necessary things that would need to be protected if such an incident were to occur (such as making sure that other things that are necessary to maintaining the safety and integrity of the plant are not only protected, but can still function with the increased protection, in a time of need).

This regulatory scheme is interesting because it seems to allow for significant freedom and creativity in compliance. Presumably this will allow the nuclear power plant operators to choose for themselves which option is most efficient for the situation. This seems like a proper idea because it doesn't force limited options upon the regulated entities. I am concerned with the ability for those who inspect and verify compliance. If there are an infinite number of options for a nuclear power plant to comply with the regulations, it seems unlikely that the regulators will be able to become proficiently knowledgeable about the system to accurately judge it. I'm sure you have considered this trade-off, but it seems like it would be an important consideration. I am also curious as to the regulatory mechanism that will ensure continued compliance—whether there is ongoing monitoring of the safety structures.

These standards seem to be set quite high, though the cost of compliance seems quite low. As a pro-nuclear person, I think this is great. Being that, as a society, we are very (arguably overly) concerned about the dangers of nuclear power plants, meltdowns, and other safety issues, I think it is especially important to have especially strict regulations. This is beneficial because it can prevent any unnecessary criticism from those outside who are against nuclear power and, more importantly, because it could actually prevent a potential disaster from occurring. A freak accident, such as a tornado missile hitting and damaging a nuclear power plant, would seemingly destroy the public perception of nuclear power. Given the public concern after the non-meltdown that was Three Mile Island (and the continued fear that has resulted from an unnecessary scare) and the more legitimate Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, a real nuclear disaster in the United States would likely be a death knell for nuclear power.

Given that nuclear power is, in my opinion, a prudent ingredient into the national energy solution, these regulations seem quite good, though the ability to effectively police and regulate compliance is still a concern. The standards appear to do a sufficient job of creating nuclear power plant safety without overburdening the plants. Though given that I am the only person to comment thus far, I presume the industry isn't too upset by these regulations. Maybe that is a signal that these regulations do not go far enough.