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NRC Seeks Public Comment on Potential Changes to Regulations on Power Reactor Decommissioning

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeks public comment on potential changes to its regulations governing the decommissioning of commercial nuclear power plants.

In an “advance notice of proposed rulemaking” published today in the *Federal Register*, the agency announced its intention to develop a draft regulatory basis to support a new decommissioning rule. The new rule would establish clear requirements for decommissioning reactors in emergency preparedness, physical security and fitness-for-duty, among other areas, thereby reducing the need for exemptions from current requirements designed for operating reactors. It would also address the timeliness of decommissioning and the role of state and local governments and other organizations. The result would be a more efficient, open and reliable decommissioning process.

The NRC began a similar rulemaking process in 2000-2001, but stopped after the September 11 terrorist attacks prompted a stronger focus on security. However, five reactors have permanently shut down since the beginning of 2013, and three more are expected to cease operations by 2019. The five reactors now undergoing decommissioning required several exemptions from NRC’s regulations for operating reactors to reflect their decommissioning status. By incorporating changes into regulation, the NRC believes the transition from operation to decommissioning can become more efficient and effective for both the agency and the licensee, as well as more open and transparent for the public.

The *Federal Register* notice explains the basis for the potential rulemaking in detail and provides instructions for submitting comments. NRC staff will conduct a public meeting to discuss the draft regulatory basis and receive public comments. That meeting is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 9, from 10 a.m to 5 p.m., in the Commission Hearing Room at agency headquarters at 11555 Rockville Pike, in Rockville, Md.

Written comments will be accepted through Jan. 4.