NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001
E-mail: opa.resource@nrc.gov Site: www.nrc.gov
Blog: http://public-blog.nrc-gateway.gov

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NRC SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON DRAFT ANALYSIS TO SUPPORT REVISED "STATION BLACKOUT" RULE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is seeking public comment on the agency's draft regulatory basis to amend current requirements for U.S. nuclear power plants to safely withstand a "station blackout," or complete loss of alternating current power. The agency is amending its station blackout rule based on lessons learned from the March 2011 nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan.

One of Fukushima's key lessons was the need to ensure a nuclear power plant can keep its safety systems functioning even if normal power sources and emergency diesel generators are lost. As part of implementing this lesson, the Commission in October 2011 directed the staff to revise the station blackout rule in an expedited manner. In March 2012 the NRC issued an Order for all U.S. reactors to put "mitigating strategies" in place to safely handle extreme situations such as station blackouts. In March 2013 the Commission directed the staff to expand the rulemaking to incorporate requirements for ensuring a nuclear power plant can keep enough water in its spent fuel pool to maintain safety. The draft document concludes the agency has a proper basis for amending the rule.

The draft regulatory basis will be available on the federal government's rulemaking website under Docket ID NRC-2011-0299. The document is available now in the NRC's electronic document database, ADAMS, under accession number ML13077A453. The staff expects to hold a public meeting later this spring to discuss the document.

The draft includes specific questions for the public to consider in providing comments as the staff prepares formal revised rule language. The staff is interested in topics such as:

- How should new large reactor designs account for station blackout scenarios?
- How should small modular reactor concepts handle station blackout mitigation?
- How should human reliability be accounted for? and;
- How should the revised rule reflect information from efforts to comply with the Order?

Comments are due 45 days from issuance of a notice in the *Federal Register*, expected shortly. Comments may be submitted through the federal government's rulemaking website using Docket ID NRC-2011-0299. Comments can also be submitted via e-mail to Rulemaking.Comments@nrc.gov ; via fax to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission at

301-415-1101; via mail to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, ATTN: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff; or hand-delivered during regular workdays to 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852, between 7:30 am and 4:15 pm Eastern time.

The NRC reminds the public to exclude identifying or contact information in comment submissions that a person wants to keep private. The NRC will post all comment submissions at www.regulations.gov as well as in ADAMS, and the NRC does not routinely edit comment submissions to remove identifying or contact information.

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