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NRC PUBLISHES ALTERNATIVE FIRE PROTECTION RULE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its fire protection requirements for nuclear power plants to allow licensees to voluntarily adopt a new set of requirements that incorporate risk insights. The new fire protection rule maintains safety and provides flexibility to existing requirements.

The new rule permits reactor licensees to use the fire protection requirements contained in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 805, "Performance-Based Standard for Fire Protection for Light Water Reactor Electric Generating Plants, 2001 Edition."

"Utilities that operate reactors can now adopt the standard as their fire protection program by submitting a request to amend their license," said David Matthews, Director of the Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "After approval by the NRC, the utilities can then modify their fire protection program consistent with the standard, without prior specific NRC review and approval."

For alternatives to compliance with NFPA 805, licensees must submit a license amendment request for NRC review. The rule is part of an effort by the agency to incorporate risk information into its regulations.

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