



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC PROPOSES USING RISK INFORMATION FOR REFINING EMERGENCY REACTOR COOLING REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing the voluntary use of risk information in refining requirements for how nuclear power plants must safely handle loss-of-coolant accidents of various sizes.

The changes are outlined in a prospective rule that would be available for all currently operating plants to voluntarily implement. The proposed rule would divide all coolant piping breaks currently considered in emergency core cooling requirements into two size groups: breaks up to and including a "transition" size, and breaks larger than the transition size up to the largest pipe in the reactor coolant system. The transition size was determined through input from an expert panel as well as consideration of uncertainties in established pipe-break frequencies. The change would focus plant resources on the areas of higher risk significance.

"All the possible pipe breaks would still be covered under this rule change," said Jim Dyer, Director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "Breaks in the smaller group are considered more likely, and they'd be analyzed using existing criteria for ensuring the reactor core stays cool during and after an accident. Breaks in the larger group are considered less likely and would be analyzed with less-stringent methods, but plants would still have to show us they can mitigate the effects of those breaks and maintain core cooling."

Under the proposed rule change, plant operators could consider actions to optimize safety and operational benefits. For example, a plant might be able to eliminate fast starting and loading times for one or more emergency diesel generators, which would improve the diesel's overall reliability. The proposed rule includes criteria for ensuring these actions would continue to provide acceptable protection of public health and safety.

For more information on the proposed rule, contact NRC staff member Richard Dudley by phone at 301-415-1116 or via e-mail at rfd@nrc.gov.

Comments on the changes will be accepted for 90 days following publication of the proposed rule in the *Federal Register*, expected shortly. Comments may be mailed to: Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, ATTN: Rulemaking and Adjudications Staff. They may be e-mailed to: SECY@nrc.gov, via the NRC's rulemaking Web site at

<http://ruleforum.llnl.gov> , or through the Federal Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> .
Comments may also be faxed to the Secretary at 301-415-1101, or hand-delivered to 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Md., between 7:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. on federal workdays.

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