



NRC NEWS

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NRC APPROVES “TIME OFF” AMENDMENT TO ITS FITNESS-FOR-DUTY REGULATIONS

The NRC has approved an amendment to its fitness-for-duty rule that will allow nuclear power plants to use a different method to determine when employees must be given time off from work. The current fitness for duty regulations (10 CFR Part 26), which went into effect in March 2008, limit work hours to ensure worker fatigue does not affect plant safety and security. The new amendment offers an option for how licensees can manage worker fatigue over extended periods of time by providing workers with opportunities for sufficient rest.

The fitness for duty regulations require licensees to manage “cumulative fatigue” primarily by providing workers with a minimum number of days off within certain time frames. Last year, however, two petitions were filed with the NRC raising concerns about the minimum days off requirements. The nuclear industry also asked the NRC to allow plants more flexibility in meeting the regulations. To gather more input, the NRC held three public meetings on the subject and asked for public comments on a proposed amendment in spring 2011. While a minority of those providing comments was opposed to the amendment, the NRC also heard from maintenance, operations, and security workers, unions, and vendors, who spoke of the unintended consequences of the minimum days off requirements. Industry representatives voiced the importance of having more flexibility to improve workers’ quality of life and lessen the complexity of the rule.

The amendment approved by the NRC allows, but does not mandate, an alternative approach to the minimum days off requirements. The alternate approach still limits the number of consecutive extended work weeks an individual can work, but allows more flexibility in its application.

The NRC published the final rule, along with background information and public comment resolution, today in the *Federal Register*, and the rule will become effective on Aug. 22. In association with this final rule, the NRC’s endorsement of industry implementation guidance is available by entering ML11180A261 in the NRC’s electronic document database [search engine](#).

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