



NRC NEWS

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NRC SEEKS COMMENT ON DRAFT RULE AMENDING ABWR CERTIFICATION TO INCLUDE CONSIDERATION OF AIRCRAFT IMPACTS

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved a proposed rule that would amend the Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (ABWR) design certification to address the effects of the impact of a large commercial aircraft, in accordance with the NRC's 2009 aircraft impact assessment rule. STP Nuclear Operating Company (STPNOC) submitted an application to amend the ABWR design in June 2009.

The proposed rule would certify that STPNOC's option for the ABWR design has appropriately accounted for aircraft impact effects. This means that following such an impact, only minimal operator actions would be necessary to meet two conditions: a) the design's reactor core remains cooled or the containment remains intact; and b) spent fuel cooling or spent fuel pool integrity is maintained.

For more information on the proposed rule, contact NRC staff members Nanette Gilles or Stacey Joseph, by phone at 301-415-1180 or 415-2849, respectively, or via e-mail at Nanette.Gilles@nrc.gov or Stacey.Joseph@nrc.gov, respectively.

Comments on the changes will be accepted for 75 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: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff. They may be e-mailed to: Rulemaking.Comments@nrc.gov or submitted via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> under Docket ID NRC-2010-0134. Comments may also be faxed to the Secretary at 301-415-1101.

The NRC has already taken several steps to improve security at existing nuclear power plants, including adopting a rule in March 2007 that requires both existing and potential new reactors to defend against a more realistic threat. The agency also issued a February 2002 Order requiring all existing nuclear power plants to develop and adopt mitigative strategies to cope with large fires and explosions from any cause, including aircraft impacts. The NRC issued an updated security rule in March 2009, codifying these requirements for all existing and future nuclear power plants.

The agency does not believe nuclear power plant operators should be required to prevent the impact of large commercial aircraft; that responsibility rests with the federal government. The NRC works closely with other federal agencies such as NORAD, the Federal Aviation Administration and the intelligence community to provide layered protection against such a threat. The agency expects these efforts would effectively preclude an aircraft attack from occurring. Should such an unlikely event take place at a new plant designed in accordance with the new rule, the NRC expects the plant would be better able to withstand such a crash than the same design without changes resulting from the rule.

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