



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO NEW REACTOR APPLICATION HEARING POLICY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeks public comment on a proposed policy statement concerning the conduct of hearings on applications for new reactor licenses and related activities. The Commission is considering adopting this policy in light of the significant number of applications expected in the next few years and the agency's plans to use a "design-centered review approach" to handle the influx.

"The NRC wants to ensure the public has a fair opportunity to raise concerns with new reactor applications," said NRC Chairman Dale Klein. "At the same time, applicants with the same design should only have to resolve a generic concern once, so we're suggesting an approach that balances those competing interests."

The new applications' reactor designs are expected to be very standardized, as opposed to the highly varied set of designs for current reactors. The NRC expects its "design-centered review approach" to take advantage of these standardized designs and avoid duplicative litigation while carrying out the agency's responsibility to protect public health and safety.

The proposed policy builds on current policy, as well as recent changes to NRC regulations regarding both new reactor licensing and the conduct of hearings, to ensure a disciplined and fair hearing process. The proposed policy would set out explicit guidance for NRC staff and the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board on several points, including:

- The staff should issue a Notice of Hearing for a given application only when a complete application has been accepted, or docketed, with very few exceptions;
- The staff may consider an exemption to normal docketing procedures if an applicant files a partial application covering only the generic issues of a design referenced in other, complete applications, and;
- The Board should, whenever appropriate, consolidate into one hearing the generic issues from several applications referencing a single design.

The proposed policy statement and associated comments may be viewed and downloaded via the NRC rulemaking Web site, <http://ruleforum.llnl.gov>. For more information on the proposed policy statement, please contact Robert Weisman at 301-415-1696 or via e-mail at rmw@nrc.gov.

The NRC welcomes public comment on the proposed policy for 60 days following its publication in the *Federal Register*, expected shortly. Comments can be mailed to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, ATTN: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff. Comments can be e-mailed to SECY@nrc.gov . If you fail to receive a reply e-mail confirming that we have received your comments, please call (301) 415-1966. Comments can also be submitted online at <http://ruleforum.llnl.gov> or via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> . Comments can be hand-delivered to 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. Federal workdays, or faxed to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission at (301) 415-1101. Please include *Draft Statement of Policy on Conduct of New Reactor Licensing Proceedings* in the subject line.

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