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NRC INCREASES PENALTY LIMITS AGAINST LICENSEES

NRC has increased the dollar limits it can impose on licensees and vendors for violating agency requirements. The increase was mandated by Congress.

The maximum amounts the agency may levy for the most severe violations are increased to \$110,000 from \$100,000 for each violation, each day. The NRC normally applies penalties of this magnitude only against power reactor licensees. Lower penalties are usually applied for less severe violations and against smaller businesses, such as radioactive materials users and research reactor licensees. NRC has raised these fines by 10 percent as well, consistent with Congressional intent.

The new penalty limits were published in the October 11th edition of the Federal Register. The revision applies to violations that occur after November 11th.

The Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 mandates that federal agencies adjust their monetary fines for inflation by October 23, and then at least once every four years. The legislation limits the amount of the first increase to 10 percent of the maximum penalty amount for each level of violation.

Because Congress has required this action by law, and NRC has no discretion on its substance, there will be no public comment period offered on the final rule.

NRC's enforcement policy, NUREG-1600, has been revised to reflect the new penalty limits. The policy is available on NRC's home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nrc.gov/OE>

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