



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC PROPOSES TO AMEND REGULATIONS TO ALLOW USE OF SIMULATORS TO FULFILL PORTION OF TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR NUCLEAR PLANT OPERATORS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its regulations to allow applicants for nuclear power plant operator licenses to use simulators, rather than the controls of actual nuclear plants, in fulfilling a portion of their training requirements. The proposed rule also eliminates the requirement for licensees to submit simulator performance test results to the NRC.

The proposed changes would maintain the integrity of the operator training process by ensuring simulators replicate actual plants, and by implementing NRC reviews to ensure those simulators provide for effective training and performance assessment of operator license applicants. The changes also would eliminate outdated requirements for licensee certification of simulation facilities, and eliminate routine submittals to the NRC of simulator performance test reports which have limited value to the agency. The proposed revisions would also allow licensees to revise their simulator performance testing programs to be compatible with updated industry standards.

Eligibility for a reactor operator license calls for a rigorous combination of education, training and experience. To fulfill their experience requirements, candidates for an operator license must perform five significant reactor control manipulations at an actual plant which affect the power level of the reactor. Permitting operator candidates to fulfill some of their experience requirements on plant-specific simulators would enhance their qualifications in an environment more conducive to individualized instruction, and would reduce unnecessary regulatory burden to licensees from interrupting actual plant operations.

NRC requires that computerized control room simulators meet strict requirements and create training conditions in an environment comparable to those of the actual plant control room. Realistic scenarios are developed and used for training, which mirror situations that could actually occur under certain plant conditions.

Written comments on the proposed amendments must be received by September 18. Comments should be addressed to: Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555. Attn: Docketing and Service Branch. Comments also may be submitted via the NRC's electronic rulemaking web site, at <http://www.nrc.gov> by selecting "rulemaking" from the toolbar and then "rulemaking forum."

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