



# NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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## NRC PROPOSES ALTERNATIVE FIRE PROTECTION RULE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to amend its fire protection requirements for nuclear power plants to allow licensees to voluntarily adopt a new set of requirements that incorporate risk insights.

The proposed rule would permit reactor licensees to use the fire protection requirements contained in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 805, "Performance-Based Standard for Fire Protection for Light Water Reactor Electric Generating Plants, 2001 Edition" (NFPA 805).

Since 1979, the NRC has issued approximately 900 exemptions from its current fire protection requirements to licensees that submitted a technical evaluation demonstrating the adequacy of an alternative fire protection approach to satisfy NRC requirements. Under the proposed rule, a licensee may adopt NFPA 805 as its fire protection program by submitting a license amendment request to the NRC. After adopting NFPA 805 and completing the required analyses, a licensee may modify its fire protection program as permitted by NFPA 805. For alternative methods or analytical approaches not within NFPA 805, a licensee may submit a request for a license amendment. The proposed rule maintains safety, provides flexibility to existing fire protection requirements and reduces unnecessary burden.

Under the proposed rule, specific hazards as provided in NFPA 805 can be analyzed by the licensee and changes made without prior NRC review and approval. The proposed rule is part of an effort by NRC to incorporate risk information into its regulations.

Interested parties have until January 15, 2003 in which to comment. After that date, comments will be considered if practical to do so, but the Commission can only ensure consideration of comments received on or before this date. Additional details are available in a *Federal Register* notice published November 1.

Comments may be mailed to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001, Attention: Rulemaking and Adjudications Staff. They may be delivered to 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. on federal workdays. They can also be submitted via the NRC's rulemaking web site, at <http://ruleforum.llnl.gov> .

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