



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC STAFF ISSUES BULLETIN TO NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS ON STRATEGIES TO HANDLE EXTREME EVENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a Bulletin to companies licensed to operate U.S. nuclear power plants, requesting information on how the plants are complying with requirements to deal with the potential loss of large areas of the plant after extreme events.

The events at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan, following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, have highlighted the potential need for U.S. plants to implement mitigative strategies, sometimes called “B5b” strategies. The NRC seeks information on the plants’ approach to ensuring their strategies remain effective over time. The NRC continues to conclude these strategies can effectively cool down reactor cores and spent fuel pools even if a plant’s normal safety systems are damaged or unavailable.

“Our initial guidance on these strategies focused on the mitigative actions themselves, but we also need to consider things such as operator training and maintaining the related equipment,” said Eric Leeds, Director of the NRC’s Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. “These strategies and resources are an important part of the multi-layered approach the NRC requires so plants can maintain or restore their abilities for core cooling, containment integrity, and spent fuel pool cooling even if they lose large areas of the plant, for instance after an explosion or fire.”

“We’ll review the plants’ responses to see if they need to take any additional actions to meet our existing requirements, along with seeing what the NRC might need to do to enhance those requirements and continue to protect public health and safety,” said NRC Chairman Gregory B. Jaczko. “Our task force examining information from the Japan quake will also go over the Bulletin responses as part of its ongoing review of our requirements.”

Plants have until June 10 to respond to the Bulletin with information confirming their mitigative-strategy equipment is in place and available, as well as that the strategies can be carried out with current plant staffing. Plants have until July 11 to respond to the Bulletin with further information in areas including:

- how essential resources are maintained, tested and controlled to ensure availability;
- how strategies are re-evaluated if plant conditions or configurations change; and
- how arrangements are reached and maintained with local emergency response organizations.

Plant management must guarantee under oath that all responses to the Bulletin are accurate and complete.

Bulletin 2011-01, "Mitigating Strategies," will be available on the NRC [website](#) and via the agency's electronic document database, ADAMS, by entering "ML111250360" in the ADAMS [search engine](#).

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