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NRC AMENDS REGULATIONS ON PHYSICAL PROTECTION FOR STORAGE OF SPENT FUEL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its regulations for the physical protection of spent nuclear reactor fuel and high-level radioactive waste while in storage. The revisions clarify the requirements and reduce regulatory uncertainty, without reducing the level of protection of public health and safety.

The final rule requires licensees to:

- Store this type of material only within a protected area (an area with controlled access and physical barriers, such as chain-link fences with barbed wire topping or concrete walls);
- Protect the material by an additional barrier offering significant penetration resistance, such as an NRC-approved cask or a reactor building;
- Ensure that only authorized individuals are granted access to the protected area;
- Detect and assess unauthorized penetration of, or activities within, the protected area;
- Provide the capability for timely communication to a designated response force whenever necessary; and
- Establish a security organization with written procedures.

The amendments do not apply to the storage of spent fuel under the licenses of power reactors, which are covered by other requirements. Types of storage facilities affected by the revisions are:

- Independent spent fuel storage installations that are designed, constructed and licensed specifically for the interim storage of spent fuel;

- A geologic repository that could be developed in the future by the Department of Energy (DOE); and
- Future storage facilities where interim waste storage activities may be conducted by DOE.

Other details of the regulation are contained in a Federal Register notice to be published shortly.

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