



NRC NEWS

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NRC PUBLISHES FINAL RULE ENHANCING FITNESS-FOR-DUTY REQUIREMENTS

The NRC published in the *Federal Register* today updated requirements to enhance the “fitness for duty” of operators, security officers and other personnel at nuclear power plants and certain nuclear materials facilities. The requirements will go into effect in 30 days, but the rule includes a phased approach for two elements of the new requirements.

“This is an important final rule that substantially updates requirements for key plant personnel in operating reactors and for construction workers for new reactors,” said NRC Chairman Dale Klein. “This rule addresses both worker fatigue, and drug and alcohol testing. It also brings the NRC requirements into alignment with other federal rules and guidelines.”

The final rule (<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/cfr/fr/2008/20080331.pdf>) pertains to 10 CFR Part 26 requirements, which include chemical and alcohol testing, employee assistance programs and work-hour limitations. It essentially requires that “fitness for duty” programs at NRC-licensed facilities be more effective, and establish clear and enforceable work-hour controls. It also offers greater clarity on drug and alcohol testing requirements for construction workers who will be working on new reactor construction.

The first 10 CFR Part 26 was finalized in 1989, with drug and alcohol testing requirements. The rule was expanded in 1993, and has been frequently under review since that time. Work on this final rule, which began in 1996, included combining it with requirements to control fatigue of nuclear power plant workers in 2004, several rounds of public comment and incorporation of several petitions for rulemaking.

While drug and alcohol testing requirements for construction workers involved in new reactor plant construction will be effective within 30 days, licensees have 12 months to implement the portion of the new rule addressing drug and alcohol testing programs at operating sites. Licensees also have 18 months to be in full compliance with stricter work-hour controls, which in essence will reduce the number of hours certain workers can work each week.

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