

No: 13-036

May 15, 2013

CONTACT: Maureen Conley, 301-415-8200

NRC Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Rule for Packaging and Transporting Radioactive Materials

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is requesting public comment on proposed changes to its regulations for packaging and transporting radioactive material.

The agency's current transportation regulations are based, in part, on standards developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an international standard-setting organization. The IAEA periodically revises its transportation standards to reflect acquired knowledge and experience. The NRC is updating its own regulations to be compatible with the IAEA's 2009 transportation standards and the U.S. Department of Transportation's regulations.

The NRC and the DOT share regulatory authority over radioactive materials transport. The DOT is the lead federal agency for regulating hazardous materials transport in the United States and for interacting with the IAEA.

The proposal includes 13 changes designed to improve consistency with IAEA standards. In addition, the NRC is proposing to revise a fissile material exemption to further reduce the very low chance that uranium with very low enrichment could inadvertently begin a nuclear chain reaction.

The NRC is also proposing changes to the requirements for quality assurance programs to allow certain program amendments to be made without prior NRC approval, and to extend the duration of NRC's program approvals. Quality assurance refers to the procedures and actions necessary to provide confidence that a system or component will perform satisfactorily. The quality assurance program changes will make the agency's oversight more efficient and allow its focus to remain on reducing the risk of transportation incidents.

Other changes would clarify the requirements for obtaining a general license, the responsibilities of general licensees, and the roles of certificate holders, applicants for a certificate of compliance, and the users of certified transport packages.

The public may submit comments on the proposed changes within 75 days of publication in the Federal Register, expected shortly. The proposed rule will be available on the federal rulemaking website at www.regulations.gov under Docket ID NRC-2008-0198.

Comments may be submitted on that website; by email to Rulemaking.Comments@nrc.gov; by fax to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 301-415-1101; or by mail to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, ATTN: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff.