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NRC ISSUES INTERIM GUIDANCE ON TRANSPORTATION
OF STEAM GENERATORS

The staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a generic letter providing interim guidance on transportation regulations governing the shipment of used steam generators. The letter was sent today to all holders of operating licenses and decommissioning facilities with possession-only licenses for pressurized-water nuclear power reactors.

In the past, shippers of steam generators have been required to obtain package certification from the NRC before shipping them. Steam generators were required to meet the standards for non-accident resistant, or Type A packages, because they were categorized for shipment as low-specific activity material.

However, in a change which became effective April 1, NRC and the Department of Transportation have revised their regulations to make them compatible with those of the International Atomic Energy Agency. As a result, discarded steam generators may now be categorized as surface contaminated objects, a newly defined category of radioactive materials. Unless the unshielded dose rate at three meters from the steam generator shipped as a surface contaminated object exceeds one rem per hour, NRC package certification is not required.

The generic letter makes two other important clarifications of federal regulations, as they apply to steam generator shipments:

1. If a shipper can demonstrate that a steam generator that qualifies as a surface contaminated object, with weld-sealed enclosures provides equivalent safety to the required packaging, the shipper may request an exemption from DOT transport requirements. Pursuant to the applicable DOT regulations, notices of applications for these exemptions will be published in the Federal Register.

2. If the necessary DOT approvals are obtained and if the requirements of NRC regulations are otherwise met, the shipper will not have to seek an identical exemption from NRC.

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