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NRC Seeks Public Comment on Potential Changes to Radiation Protection Regulations

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking public comment on regulatory issues and options for potential changes to the agency's radiation protection regulations, to achieve greater alignment between the regulations and the 2007 recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP).

The NRC believes that the agency's current regulations continue to provide adequate protection of health and safety of workers, the public and the environment. The ICRP recommendations, contained in ICRP Publication 103, propose measures that go beyond what is needed to provide adequate protection. In a Staff Requirements Memorandum dated April 2, the Commission directed the staff to engage stakeholders and interested parties on the benefits and burdens of any potential regulatory changes based on the ICRP recommendations.

The staff will use public comments over the next two to three years to develop a technical basis for potential rulemaking, for presentation to the Commission. The staff will consult with state regulatory agencies, the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, the Interagency Steering Committee on Radiation Standards, other federal agencies, and other organizations while developing the technical basis.

"The Commission is concerned about the potential impact of effectively lowering the occupational dose limit to 2 rem [from the current 5 rem] per year," the Commission said in the memorandum. "In developing the technical basis for rulemaking, the staff should examine how lower dose limits have affected the medical and industrial sectors in countries that have implemented them."

Possible changes to both material- and reactor-based radiation protection regulations are outlined by the NRC staff in SECY-08-0197, available on the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/secys/2008/secy2008-0197/2008-0197scy.pdf>. The Commission's Staff Requirements Memorandum is available at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/srm/2008/2008-0197srm.pdf>. The NRC is currently developing a dedicated Web site for public comments on this issue. Comments may also be submitted by e-mail to Regs4RP.Resource@nrc.gov.

