



NRC NEWS

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NRC APPROVES CHANGES TO THE DESIGN BASIS THREAT AND ISSUES ORDERS FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO FURTHER ENHANCE SECURITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, after extensive deliberation and interaction with stakeholders, has approved changes to the design basis threat (DBT). The Commission believes that the DBT represents the largest reasonable threat against which a regulated private guard force should be expected to defend under existing law. These changes will be issued by Order.

In addition, the Commission has approved the issuance of two other Orders to nuclear plants regarding work hours, training, and qualification requirements for security personnel to further enhance protection of public health and safety, as well as the common defense and security. The three Orders will be issued to all 103 operating commercial nuclear power plants.

The three Orders, which are being issued today, will be effective immediately, but allow transition periods for full implementation. With these actions, the Commission expects that there will be a period of regulatory stability during which operating commercial plant licensees will be able to consolidate these and previously ordered security enhancements.

These Orders, in combination with the recently-issued Order in the area of access authorization, enhance the already strong defense capability at these sites using three interdependent elements directed to best protect the public, with the appropriate resources placed at the right places. These elements are:

- the revised Design Basis Threat and associated defensive capabilities derived from previous measures that the Commission directed;
- tighter work hour control and more robust training requirements for security personnel, to increase their capability to respond to threats; and
- enhanced access authorization controls to ensure all plant personnel with access to critical areas have had the most rigorous background checks permitted by law.

The Order that imposes revisions to the Design Basis Threat requires power plants to implement additional protective actions to protect against sabotage by terrorists and other adversaries. The details of the design basis threat are safeguards information pursuant to Section 147 of the Atomic Energy Act and will not be released to the public. This Order builds on the changes made by the Commission's February 25, 2002 Order. The Commission believes that this DBT represents the largest reasonable threat against which a regulated private security force should be expected to defend under existing law. It was arrived at after extensive deliberation and interaction with cleared stakeholders from other Federal agencies, State governments and industry.

Under NRC regulations, power reactor licensees must ensure that the physical protection plan for each site is designed and implemented to provide high assurance in defending against the DBT to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety and common defense and security. Extensive changes in those physical protection plans will now be made and submitted to NRC for approval.

The second Order describes additional measures related to security force personnel fitness for duty and security force work hours. It is to ensure that excessive work hours do not challenge the ability of nuclear power plant security forces to remain vigilant and effectively perform their duties in protecting the plants. However, the Order does include provisions to allow increases in work hours under certain conditions, once specific requirements are met. The NRC developed this unclassified Order through a public process. The NRC carefully considered comments from power reactor licensees, security force personnel, public citizen groups and other agencies in reaching its final decision. The Order will be publicly available on NRC's website at: <http://www.nrc.gov>.

The third Order describes additional requirements related to the development and application of an enhanced training and qualification program for armed security personnel at power reactor facilities. These additional measures include security drills and exercises appropriate for the protective strategies and capabilities required to protect the nuclear power plants against sabotage by an assaulting force. This Order requires more frequent firearms training and qualification under a broader range of conditions consistent with site-specific protective strategies. The details of the enhanced training requirements are safeguards information, and will not be released to the public. As with the DBT Order, the Commission solicited comments on a draft training Order from cleared stakeholders, including security personnel and took those comments under consideration in reaching its final decision.

“With the completion of these complementary Orders,” Chairman Nils J. Diaz said, “the public should be reassured that the nation's nuclear power plants are well-secured against potential threats. The NRC intends to continue working closely with the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal agencies, as well as with State and local law enforcement and emergency planning officials to ensure an overall integrated approach to the security of these critical facilities.”

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