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[Proposed Rules]
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Proposed Rules

Federal Register

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

10 CFR Parts 2, 51, and 54

[NRC-2008-0415]
RIN 3150-AI43

Amendments to Adjudicatory Process Rules and Related Requirements

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or the Commission) is proposing to amend its adjudicatory rules of practice. This proposed rule would make changes to the NRC's adjudicatory process that NRC believes will promote fairness, efficiency, and openness in NRC adjudicatory proceedings. This proposed rule would also correct errors and omissions that have been identified since the major revisions to the NRC's Rules of Practice in early 2004.

DATES: Comments on the proposed rule must be received on or before May 16, 2011. Comments received after this date will be considered if it is practical to do so. However, the NRC is able to ensure consideration only of comments received on or before this date.

ADDRESSES: Please include Docket ID NRC-2008-0415 in the subject line of your comments. For instructions on submitting comments and accessing documents related to this action, see Section I, ``Submitting Comments

and Accessing Information'' in the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section of this document. You may submit comments by any one of the following methods:

Federal rulemaking Web site: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for documents filed under Docket ID NRC-2008-0415. Address questions about NRC dockets to Carol Gallagher, telephone: 301-492-3668; e-mail: Carol.Gallagher@nrc.gov.

Mail comments to: Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, ATTN: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff.

E-mail comments to: Rulemaking.Comments@nrc.gov. If you do not receive a reply e-mail confirming that we have received your comments, contact us directly at 301-415-1966.

Hand-deliver comments to: 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852 between 7:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. during Federal workdays (telephone: 301-415-1966).

Fax comments to: Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission at 301-415-1101.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tison Campbell, Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, telephone: 301-415-8579, e-mail: Tison.Campbell@nrc.gov.

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I. Submitting Comments and Accessing Information

Comments submitted in writing or in electronic form will be posted on the NRC Web site and on the Federal rulemaking Web site, <http://www.regulations.gov>. Because your comments will not be edited to remove any identifying or contact information, the NRC cautions you against including any information in your submission that you do not want to be publicly disclosed. The NRC requests that any party soliciting or aggregating comments received from other persons for submission to the NRC inform those persons that the NRC will not edit their comments to remove any identifying or contact information, and therefore, they should not include any information in their comments that they do not want publicly disclosed.

You can access publicly available documents related to this action using the following methods:

NRC's Public Document Room (PDR): The public may examine and have copied for a fee publicly available documents at the NRC's PDR, Room 01-F21, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS): Publicly available documents created or received at the NRC are available electronically at the NRC's Electronic Reading Room at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. From this page, the public can gain entry into ADAMS, which provides text and image files of NRC's public documents. If you do not have access to ADAMS or if there are problems in accessing the documents located in ADAMS, contact the NRC's PDR reference staff at 1-800-397-4209, or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail to PDR.Resource@nrc.gov.

Federal rulemaking Web site: Public comments and supporting materials related to this proposed rule can be found at <http://www.regulations.gov> by

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searching on Docket ID NRC-2008-0415.

II. Background

In a final rulemaking published in the Federal Register on January 14, 2004, 69 FR 2181 (2004 part 2 revisions), the NRC substantially modified its rules of practice governing agency adjudications--Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR) part 2. Portions of 10 CFR parts 1, 50, 51, 52, 54, 60, 63, 70, 72, 73, 75, 76 and 110 also were amended at that time. On May 11, 2004 (69 FR 25997), the NRC corrected errors in 10 CFR part 2, Appendix D.

Since the new rules of practice became effective, provisions requiring correction or clarification of ambiguities, and several areas where further improvements could be achieved, have been identified. Therefore, the NRC is publishing this proposed rule to solicit public comments on proposed corrections of those errors and proposed improvements to the rules governing its adjudicatory proceedings. Participants in NRC adjudicatory proceedings who will use these rules should note that several revisions to 10 CFR part 2 also were adopted in recent years:

Licenses, Certifications, and Approvals for Nuclear Power Plants (72 FR 4935; August 28, 2007) (Part 52 Rule);
Use of Electronic Submissions in Agency Hearings (72 FR 49139; August 28, 2007) (E-Filing Rule);
Limited Work Authorizations for Nuclear Power Plants (72 FR 57415; October 9, 2007);
Delegated Authority To Order Use of Procedures for Access to Certain Sensitive Unclassified Information (73 FR 10978; February 29, 2008);
Interlocutory Review of Rulings on Requests by Potential Parties for Access to Sensitive Unclassified Non-Safeguards Information and Safeguards Information (73 FR 12627; March 10, 2008); and
Protection of Safeguards Information (73 FR 63545; October 24, 2008).

III. The Decision To Issue a Proposed Rule

The amendments in this proposed rulemaking are procedural rules exempt from the notice and comment requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and NRC regulations. 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(3)(A) and 10 CFR 2.804(d)(1). Nonetheless, the NRC is issuing this rulemaking as a proposed rule for public comment in order to benefit from stakeholder input.

IV. Effectiveness of the Final Rule

The new and amended requirements in the final rule would not be retroactively applied to presiding officer determinations and decisions issued prior to the effective date of the final rule (e.g., a presiding officer order in response to a petition or motion), nor would these requirements be retroactively imposed on parties, such that a party would have to compensate for past activities that were accomplished in conformance with the requirements in effect at the time, but would no longer meet the new or amended requirements in the final rule. Further, in ongoing adjudicatory proceedings if there is a dispute over an adjudicatory obligation or situation arising prior to the effective date of the new rule, such disputes would be governed by the former rule provisions. However, the new or amended requirements would be effective and govern all obligations and disputes that arise after the effective date of the final rule. For example, if a Board issues, prior to the effective date of the final rule, a scheduling order incorporating by reference Sec. 2.336(d), which requires parties to update their disclosures every 14 days, that obligation would change to 30 days once the effective date of the rule is reached. Therefore, Licensing Boards should be aware of the effectiveness of the final rule and take the necessary steps to notify parties of their obligations once the final rule becomes effective.

V. Discussion of Changes and Corrections of Errors

A. Part 2--Title

The current title of 10 CFR part 2, Rules of Practice for Domestic Licensing Proceedings and Issuance of Orders, does not accurately reflect the scope, nor does it track the language of the APA. The NRC is proposing a new title for 10 CFR part 2: Agency Rules of Practice and Procedure, which would better reflect the scope of its subparts and

would mirror the language of the APA.

B. Subpart C--Sections 2.300 Through 2.390

1. Section 2.305--Service of documents; methods; proof.

Section 2.305(c)(4) currently refers to ``any paper,' ' which could be interpreted to exclude electronic documents filed through the NRC's E-Filing system. The NRC is therefore proposing to clarify that a signed certificate of service must be included with ``any document' ' served upon the parties in a proceeding under 10 CFR part 2. Under this rule, the certificate of service must include the name and address of each person upon whom service is being made (which for electronic submissions under the E-Filing system should include, at a minimum, the name and e-mail address used for service of each person in the E-Filing system service list for a proceeding upon whom service needs to be made) and the date and method of service. Because it is the responsibility of a participant submitting a document to the E-Filing system to comply with the service requirements, a certificate of service that simply states the document is being served ``per the service list in the E-Filing system' ' without listing the names and addresses of each of those being served is insufficient to comply with Sec. 2.305(c)(4). The NRC notes that Sec. 2.304 requires that electronic documents be signed using a participant's digital certificate; in such circumstances it is not necessary to submit an electronic copy of the document that includes an actual signature.

Paragraph 2.305(g)(1) does not currently provide an address for service upon the NRC staff when a filing is not being made through the E-Filing system and no attorney representing the NRC staff has filed a notice of appearance in the proceeding. The proposed paragraph (g)(1) would provide addresses to be used to accomplish service on the NRC staff in these circumstances.

2. Section 2.309--Hearing requests, petitions to intervene, requirements for standing, and contentions.

Section 2.309 contains the generally applicable procedures for requesting hearings and submitting petitions to intervene in NRC proceedings, and sets forth the requirements for submitting contentions and establishing legal standing to participate in NRC proceedings. The NRC is proposing to make several changes to Sec. 2.309.

a. Section 2.309(b)--Timing.

Section 2.309(b)(5) currently references orders issued under Sec. 2.202, but does not reference notices of violation imposing a civil penalty issued under Sec. 2.205. Section 2.205 notices of violation, like Sec. 2.202 orders, provide ``twenty (20) days * * * or other time specified in the notice' ' for individuals to file an answer. This provision does not match the 60 days allowed by Sec. 2.309(b), which could be interpreted as applying to Sec. 2.205 notices of violation. The proposed Sec. 2.309(b)(5) would correct this omission by adding a reference to Sec. 2.205 to reflect that notices of violation issued in Sec. 2.205 civil penalty proceedings have timing requirements similar to those of Sec. 2.202 orders.

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b. Sections 2.309(c) and (f)--Subsequent Submission of Petition/ Request or New or Amended Contentions.

Current Sec. 2.309(c)(1) contains eight balancing factors that determine whether to grant or admit ``nontimely' ' hearing requests,

intervention petitions, or contentions. These factors include the three factors for standing--also found at Sec. 2.309(d)(1)(ii) through (iv)--and the following five factors: Good cause for the failure to file on time; the availability of other means to protect the requestor's or petitioner's interest; the extent to which the requestor's or petitioner's interest will be represented by other parties; the extent to which the requestor's or petitioner's interest will broaden the issues or delay the proceeding; and the extent to which the requestor's or petitioner's participation may reasonably be expected to assist in developing a sound record. The ``good cause'' factor is given the most weight, and ``[i]f a petitioner cannot show good cause, then its demonstration on the other factors must be ``compelling.''' Dominion Nuclear Connecticut, Inc. (Millstone Nuclear Power Station, Units 2 and 3), CLI-05-24, 62 NRC 551, 564-65 (2005) (footnote with citation omitted).

Good cause is not defined in the regulations, but has been defined by the NRC in case law as a showing that the petitioner ``not only * * * could not have filed within the time specified in the notice of opportunity for hearing, but also that it filed as soon as possible thereafter.''' Id. In addition, Sec. 2.309(f)(2) identifies three factors to be considered in determining whether to admit a new or amended contention. These factors include whether the new or amended contention is based on information that was not previously available. For example, if a document has not been prepared and is referred to as a forthcoming document, the appropriate time to file a contention based upon the document is after its publication. The two remaining factors in Sec. 2.309(f)(2) include whether the information that was not previously available is materially different from information that was previously available, and whether the new or amended contention has been submitted in a timely fashion after the availability of the new information. The Sec. 2.309(f) three factor test appears to be a specific application of the case law definition of ``good cause.''

Thus, in practice, the admissibility of late-filed contentions usually depends on whether good cause is found. A showing that many of the other factors support the admission of a late-filed contention is rarely sufficient to overcome a lack of good cause. See, e.g., Private Fuel Storage (Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation), LBP-00-28, 52 NRC 226, 239-240 (2000) and Tennessee Valley Authority (Watts Bar Nuclear Plant, Unit 2), CLI-10-12, ---- NRC ---- (Mar. 26 2010) (slip op.) (the Commission noted that ``it would be a rare case where we would excuse a non-timely petition absent good cause'') Id. at 2. And in other cases, the NRC's determination on the existence of good cause appears to turn on one or two factors unique to that proceeding, with a generic recitation or cursory acknowledgement of the other factors and how they offset each other. See, e.g., Crow Butte Resources (North Trend Expansion Project) LBP-08-06, 67 NRC 241, 259-260 (2008).

The proposed rule would simplify the requirements governing requests for hearing, intervention petitions, or new or amended contentions filed after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b) by: (1) Making good cause the sole factor to be considered when evaluating whether to review the admissibility of a new or amended contention, petition, or hearing request; (2) defining good cause as those factors currently in Sec. 2.309(f)(2)(i) through (iii); (3) adding clarifying information regarding the need to address interest and standing; and (4) referring to ``nontimely'' contentions as ``new or amended.''' Although we would no longer use the terms ``late-filed'' or ``nontimely'' and would use the term ``new or amended'' to refer to contentions filed after the

initial filing date for contentions had expired, the current NRC case law would continue to be applied in ruling on those requests.

The proposed amendments to Sec. 2.309 would apply the good cause factor to all filings after the initial filing deadline and would adopt the current Sec. 2.309(f)(2)(i) through (iii) factors as the standards to be applied when evaluating whether good cause exists. This change would simplify the review of filings after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b). These changes would allow the parties, participants, and the presiding officer to focus their resources on the most relevant questions related to the admissibility of new or amended contentions (i.e., whether good cause exists and whether the contentions meet the admissibility requirements of Sec. 2.309(f)).

Section 2.309(c)(1) would require a requestor or petitioner to provide a justification supporting the filing after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b), consisting of ``good cause'' as defined in Sec. 2.309(c)(2). Paragraph (c)(2) would treat the three criteria for considering new or amended contentions that are currently contained in paragraph (f)(2) as the factors that must be considered under the good cause determination of proposed paragraph (c)(1). The NRC believes that the factors in current Sec. 2.309(f)(2)(i) through (iii) are a useful, specific application of ``good cause.'' Presiding officers should evaluate whether a filing after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b) satisfies the factors in Sec. 2.309(c)(2)(i) through (iii) to determine whether a petitioner has demonstrated good cause.

Proposed paragraph (c)(3) would make clear that, apart from demonstrating good cause, a petitioner seeking admission to the proceeding after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b) would need to satisfy standing and contention admissibility requirements. Paragraph (c)(4) would apply to a participant or a party who seeks admission of a new or amended contention, and who has already satisfied the standing requirements in Sec. 2.309(d).

This revision would, in part, adopt a line of reasoning first proposed by an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board in the Vermont Yankee power uprate proceeding; the Board concluded that new or amended contentions filed after the initial filing need not satisfy the Sec. 2.309(c)(1) factors if the Sec. 2.309(f)(2)(i) through (iii) factors are met. Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee LLC (Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station), LBP-05-32, 62 NRC 813 (2005). The NRC believes that this should be the appropriate standard for presiding officers to apply when evaluating whether good cause exists.

The NRC invites comments on the effect (if any) of eliminating the other late-filing factors and relying solely on good cause. As discussed above, case law has shown that good cause is given the most weight when evaluating new or amended contentions, and absent good cause, the other factors must be--but are rarely found to be--compelling. Would limiting the late-filing criteria to good cause have a detrimental effect on a petitioner's ability to have new or amended contentions admitted? How often, without showing good cause, have petitioners been able to rely on the other factors to meet the requirements of Sec. 2.309(c)? Should the NRC consider removing only some of the other late-filing requirements? If so, which ones?

c. Section 2.309(d)--Standing.

Section 2.309(d) sets forth the standing requirements and also contains some requirements that do not generally relate to standing. To clarify and to better articulate the generally applicable standing requirements, several revisions to Sec. 2.309(d) are being proposed. The

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general standing criteria in Sec. 2.309(d)(1) would remain the same. A revised Sec. 2.309(d)(2) would adopt the requirements of the first sentence of current Sec. 2.309(d)(3), which requires the presiding officer to consider the paragraph (d)(1) factors when determining whether the petitioner has an interest affected by the proceeding. Revised paragraph (d)(3) would retain the existing provision that in enforcement proceedings the licensee or other person against whom the action is taken is deemed to have standing. Current Sec. 2.309(d)(2) contains special requirements for States, local governmental bodies, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribes that seek status as parties in proceedings. But some of these requirements (e.g., the need to propose one or more contentions; the need to designate a single representative) do not relate to standing. The present Sec. 2.309(d)(2) provisions would be revised and would be moved to a new Sec. 2.309(h), which is discussed in the next section.

d. Section 2.309(d)(2) moved to 2.309(h)--State, local governmental body, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribe.

As stated, the present Sec. 2.309(d)(2) provisions for government participation, which do not contain generally applicable standing requirements like the rest of Sec. 2.309, would be revised and moved to a new Sec. 2.309(h). The proposed Sec. 2.309(h)(1), based on the existing Sec. 2.309(d)(2)(i), would require any State, local governmental body or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe seeking to participate as a party to submit at least one admissible contention. This section would also include the requirement that each governmental entity designate a single representative for the hearing. If a request for hearing or petition to intervene were granted, the NRC would admit as a party a single designated representative of the State, a single designated representative for each local governmental body (county, municipality, or other subdivision), and a single designated representative for each Federally-recognized Indian Tribe, as applicable. This proposed section would also require, as provided in the statement of considerations for the 2004 part 2 revisions, that:

Where a State's constitution provides that both the Governor and another State official or State governmental body may represent the interests of the State in a proceeding, the Governor and the other State official/government body will be considered separate potential parties. Each must separately satisfy the relevant contention requirement, and each must designate its own representative (that is, the Governor must designate a single representative, and the State official must separately designate a representative). (69 FR 2182, 2222; January 14, 2004).

The proposed Sec. 2.309(h)(2) would be based on the existing Sec. 2.309(d)(2)(ii), which states that in any potential proceeding for a facility (the term ``facility'' is defined in Sec. 2.4) located within its boundaries, the State, local governmental body or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe seeking party status need not further establish its standing. As revised, proposed Sec. 2.309(h)(1) and (h)(2) would delete the word ``affected'' from the phrase ``Federally-recognized Indian Tribe.'' The use of ``affected'' in this context is proper only in a high-level radioactive waste disposal proceeding. For the same reason, the NRC proposes to remove ``affected'' from Sec. 2.315(c)

(regarding interested government participation) and from the definition of ``Participant'' added to Sec. 2.4 in the E-Filing Rule (August 28, 2007; 49139, 49149). Existing Sec. 2.309(d)(2)(iii) would be redesignated as Sec. 2.309(h)(3).

e. Section 2.309(h) moved to 2.309(i)--Answers to requests for hearing and petitions to intervene; Replies to answers.

The present Sec. 2.309(h), governing the filing of answers and replies to hearing requests and petitions to intervene, would be redesignated as Sec. 2.309(i) and would be further revised. The current Sec. 2.309(h)(1) refers to ``proffered contentions,''' the preamble of current Sec. 2.309(h) limits paragraph (h) to filing deadlines for hearing requests and intervention petitions, and there is no clear reference to contentions submitted after the initial filing. The NRC believes that the same deadlines should apply to answers and replies for new or amended contentions as apply to intervention petitions and hearing requests filed after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b). The NRC is therefore proposing to amend this section to include answers and replies to requests to admit new or amended contentions after the initial filing. Because this change would cover all filings after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b), the reference to ``proffered contentions'' in paragraph (h)(1) (proposed paragraph (i)(1)) would no longer be necessary and would be removed. The reference in current paragraph (h)(1) to ``paragraphs (a) through (g)'' would be changed to ``paragraphs (a) through (h)'' due to the addition of proposed new paragraph (h).

f. Section 2.309(i) moved to new 2.309(j)--Decision on request/petition.

The current Sec. 2.309(i) would be redesignated as Sec. 2.309(j). The redesignated Sec. 2.309(j) would contain a new citation reference made necessary by the new Sec. 2.309(h). Also, proposed Sec. 2.309(j) would be revised to provide that if the presiding officer cannot issue a decision on each request for hearing or petition to intervene within 45 days of the conclusion of the pre-hearing conference, the presiding officer shall issue a notice advising the Commission and the parties as to when the decision will issue. If no pre-hearing conference is conducted, the 45-day period begins after the filing of answers and replies under Sec. 2.309(i).

3. Section 2.311--Interlocutory review of rulings on requests for hearings/petitions to intervene, selection of hearing procedures, and requests by potential parties for access to sensitive unclassified non-safeguards information and safeguards information.

Section 2.311(b) allows parties to appeal orders of the presiding officer to the Commission concerning a request for hearing, petition to intervene, or a request to access SUNSI or SGI within ten days after the service of the order. Any party who opposes the appeal may file a brief in opposition within ten days after service of the appeal. Experience has demonstrated that the filing time provided under this section is unnecessarily short, and sometimes results in superficial appellate briefs. Most adjudicatory bodies allow substantially more time for litigants to frame appellate arguments and to perform the necessary research and analysis. Well-considered briefs enable the appellate body, here the Commission, to make faster and better-reasoned decisions. The NRC is therefore proposing to extend the time to file an appeal and a brief in opposition to an appeal from ten to 25 days. The NRC does not expect the proposed change in appeal deadlines to result in any delays in licensing. For one thing, higher-quality briefs should expedite appellate decision-making. Moreover, most of the appellate

litigation at the NRC is preliminary to any final licensing decisions; it takes place before the NRC staff finishes its safety and environmental reviews and generally does not affect the timing of those reviews.

4. Section 2.314--Appearance and practice before the Commission in adjudicatory proceedings.

Paragraph 2.314(c)(3) allows anyone disciplined under Sec. 2.314(c) to file an appeal with the Commission within ten days after issuance of the order. Experience since the 2004 revisions of part 2 has demonstrated that ten days frequently is not adequate for parties to prepare quality appeals. The NRC is therefore proposing to extend the time to file an appeal of an order disciplining

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a party from ten to 25 days. The NRC believes that extending the time for appeals will result in higher-quality appeals.

5. Section 2.315--Participation by a person not a party.

Current Sec. 2.315(c) allows interested State, local governmental bodies, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribes that have not been admitted as parties under Sec. 2.309 a reasonable opportunity to participate in hearings. The NRC is proposing to amend Sec. 2.315(c) to clarify that States, local governmental bodies, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribes that are allowed to participate in hearings take the proceeding as they find it, consistent with longstanding NRC case law. See, e.g., Pacific Gas and Electric Co. (Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, Units 1 and 2), ALAB-600, 12 NRC 3, 8 (1980); Long Island Lighting Co. (Shoreham Nuclear Power Station, Unit 1), LBP-83-13, 17 NRC 469, 471-72 (1983), citing 10 CFR 2.714(c) (current 2.315(c)); Cincinnati Gas and Electric Co. (Wm. H. Zimmer Nuclear Station), LBP-80-6, 11 NRC 148, 151 (1980).

6. Section 2.319--Power of the presiding officer.

As part of the 2004 revisions to part 2, the NRC eliminated ``redundant or duplicate provisions in Subpart J that would be covered by the generally applicable provisions in Subpart C'' (69 FR 2212; January 14, 2004). Section 2.319(1) would be updated to clarify the scope of the power of the presiding officer to refer rulings or certify questions to the Commission, consistent with the change to Sec. 2.323, discussed in the next section.

7. Section 2.323--Motions.

The NRC proposes to amend Sec. 2.323(f) to clarify the criteria for referrals in this paragraph, and to make the referral criteria consistent with the Commission's standards for consideration of such referrals. The criterion on ``prompt decision * * * necessary to prevent detriment to the public interest or unusual delay or expense'' would be removed to make clear that this criterion concerns the prompt decision of the Commission. The second criterion on ``the decision or ruling involves a novel issue that merits Commission review'' would be revised to make clear that: (1) This criterion concerns the presiding officer's decision, and (2) the presiding officer's decision must raise or create ``significant and novel'' issues that may be either ``legal or policy'' in nature.

8. Section 2.335--Consideration of Commission rules and regulations in adjudicatory proceedings.

Section 2.335 details the procedures through which a challenge to the Commission's regulations may be raised as part of an adjudicatory proceeding. The current text of the rule limits these challenges to ``a

party to an adjudicatory proceeding,' which would seem to exclude petitioners from challenging the Commission's regulations. The Commission recognizes that challenges to the Commission's regulations are frequently contained in petitions to intervene and requests for hearing. Further, the Commission recognizes that petitioners may have a legitimate interest in raising such challenges before they are granted party status and that Atomic Safety and Licensing Boards have allowed petitioners to raise these concerns before being admitted as parties. See, e.g., Carolina Power and Light Co. (Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant, Unit 1), LBP-07-11, 66 NRC 41, 57-58 (2007).

Also, a contention that challenges any Commission rule is outside the scope of the proceeding because, absent a waiver, 'no rule or regulation of the Commission * * * is subject to attack * * * in any adjudicatory proceeding.' Similarly, any contention that amounts to an attack on applicable statutory requirements must be rejected by a licensing board as outside the scope of the proceeding. A petitioner may, however, within the adjudicatory context submit a request for waiver of a rule under 10 CFR 2.335, and outside the adjudicatory context file a petition for rulemaking under 10 CFR 2.802 or a request that the NRC Staff take enforcement action under 10 CFR 2.206. Id. (citations omitted).

The NRC is therefore proposing to amend this section to clarify that, in accordance with NRC practice, 'participants to an adjudicatory proceeding,' not just parties, may seek a waiver or an exception for a particular proceeding.

9. Section 2.336--General Discovery.

Section 2.336(d) currently requires parties to update their mandatory disclosures every 14 days. Experience with adjudications since early 2004 has demonstrated that the current disclosure provisions are much more burdensome for litigants than was initially anticipated. Part of the burden is the frequency of required updates to the mandatory disclosures. The NRC is therefore proposing to replace the requirement to disclose information or documents within 14 days of discovery with a continuing duty to provide a disclosure update every 30 days. The Commission is also considering an alternative timeline to the proposed rule for disclosure updates. Like the proposed rule, this approach would require disclosure updates every thirty days, but, as specified hearing milestones approach, this would mirror the 14-day disclosure requirements of the current version of Sec. 2.336(d). This hearing-sensitive timeline would mitigate the burdens of the current rule, while preserving the utility of more frequent disclosure updates as hearing milestones approach.

Each update under the proposed versions of Sec. 2.336(d) would include documents subject to disclosure under this section that have not been disclosed in a prior update and that are developed, obtained, or discovered during the period that runs from five business days before the last disclosure update to five business days before the filing of the update. It is anticipated that this change to Sec. 2.336(d) would reduce the burden and increase the robustness of updated disclosures. The NRC also proposes to add a sentence to the end of Sec. 2.336(d), stating that the duty of mandatory disclosure with respect to new information or documents relevant to a contention ends when the presiding officer issues a decision on that contention, or when otherwise specified by the presiding officer or the Commission.

10. Section 2.340--Initial decision in certain contested

proceedings; immediate effectiveness of initial decisions; issuance of authorizations, permits, and licenses.

Sections 2.340(a) and (b) currently imply that the presiding officer must reach a decision prior to the issuance of a license or license amendment. But this is not necessarily the case. For operating licenses associated with production and utilization facilities, both the Atomic Energy Act and the NRC's regulations allow for the issuance of a license amendment upon a determination of ``no significant hazards consideration.'' See, e.g., 42 U.S.C. 2239, 10 CFR 50.91. Further, subparts L and N of 10 CFR part 2 allow the staff to act on an application, including an application for an initial or renewed operating license or operating license amendment, and in proceedings for an initial license or license amendment not involving a production and utilization facility, prior to the completion of any contested hearing, assuming that all other relevant regulatory requirements are met. 10 CFR 2.1202(a), 2.1210(c)(3), and 2.1403(a). The NRC is proposing to revise Sec. 2.340 to clarify that production and utilization facility applications--for an initial license, a renewed license, or a license amendment where the NRC has made a determination of no significant hazards consideration--could be acted upon prior to the completion of a contested hearing. The NRC also would make conforming amendments to paragraphs

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(d) and (e) of this section to clarify that in proceedings involving a manufacturing license under subpart C of 10 CFR part 52, and in proceedings not involving production and utilization facilities, the NRC staff--provided it is able to make all of the necessary findings associated with the licensing action--may act on a license, permit, or license amendment prior to the completion of a contested hearing.

Finally, this section would be amended to clarify that the presiding officer could make findings of fact and conclusions of law on any matter not put into controversy by the parties, but only to the extent that the presiding officer determines that a serious safety, environmental or common defense and security matter exists, and only to the extent the Commission, upon a required referral by the presiding officer, approves an examination of and decision on the referred matters.

11. Section 2.341--Review of decisions and actions of a presiding officer.

a. Section 2.341(b)--Petitions for review.

Section 2.341 contains requirements pertaining to the review of decisions and actions of a presiding officer by the Commission. Current Sec. 2.341(b)(1) allows parties to file a petition for review of a full or partial initial decision by a presiding officer or any other decision or action by a presiding officer with respect to which a petition for review is authorized by this part. Under the current regulations a petition for review must be filed with the Commission within 15 days of service of the decision. Similarly, Sec. 2.341(b)(3) allows other parties to file an answer supporting or opposing Commission review within ten days after service of a petition for review. And the petitioning party is allowed to file a reply brief within five days of service of any answer. Experience has demonstrated that the time the NRC's rules allow for petitions for review of an order of a presiding officer (15 days) is unnecessarily short, and sometimes results in superficial appellate briefs. Most adjudicatory

bodies allow substantially more time for litigants to frame appellate arguments and to perform the necessary research and analysis. Well-considered briefs enable the appellate body, here the Commission, to make faster and better-reasoned decisions. The NRC is therefore proposing to extend the time to file a petition for review and an answer to the petition from ten to 25 days. The NRC also is proposing to extend the time to file a reply to an answer from five to ten days.

The NRC does not expect the proposed change in appeal deadlines to result in any unnecessary delays in licensing. For one thing, higher-quality briefs should expedite appellate decisionmaking. Moreover, most of the appellate litigation at the NRC is preliminary to any final licensing decisions; it takes place before the NRC staff finishes its safety and environmental reviews and generally does not affect the timing of those reviews. Finally, even when a final presiding officer decision approving a license comes before the Commission on a petition for review, the license can be issued immediately, notwithstanding the pendency of a petition for review. See 10 CFR 2.340(f), 2.341(e).

b. Section 2.341(c)--Petitions for review not acted upon deemed denied.

As stated in the 2004 part 2 revisions, Sec. 2.341 was intended to essentially restate the provisions of former Sec. 2.786 (See 69 FR 2225; January 14, 2004). But the provisions of former Sec. 2.786(c), under which petitions for Commission review not acted upon were deemed denied, were inadvertently omitted from Sec. 2.341. Accordingly, the NRC proposes to add a new Sec. 2.341(c)(1); existing Sec. 2.341(c)(1) would be redesignated as Sec. 2.341(c)(2), and existing Sec. 2.341(c)(2) would be redesignated as Sec. 2.341(c)(3). Proposed Sec. 2.341(c)(1) would adopt the deemed denied provisions of the former Sec. 2.786(c) with the exception of the 30-day time limit, which would be extended to allow 120 days for Commission review. As a practical matter, the 30-day timeframe has necessitated extensions of time in most proceedings, as the prescribed briefing period comprehends 30 days. A 120-day Commission review period would allow for sufficient time to review the filings at the outset, without the unintended consequence of the frequent need for extensions. The NRC therefore is proposing to adopt the deemed denied provisions of former Sec. 2.786 with a 120-day time limit as a new Sec. 2.341(c)(1).

c. Section 2.341(a)--Time to act on a petition for review.

Section 2.341(a)(2) currently provides the Commission with 40 days to act on a decision of a presiding officer or a petition for review. The current 40-day timeframe has necessitated extensions of time in most proceedings, as the prescribed briefing period comprehends 30 days, often leaving the Commission insufficient time for an effective review of the filings. As discussed above with respect to the ``deemed denied'' provision, a 120-day Commission review period provides for a reasonable period to review the filings without the unintended consequence of the frequent need for extensions. The NRC therefore is proposing to extend the time for Commission review from 40 days to 120 days. As has always been the case, the Commission may act before that time or extend that period as it deems necessary.

d. Section 2.341(f)--Standards for Atomic Safety Licensing Board certifications and referrals.

The NRC proposes to revise paragraph (f) of this section to address a perceived inconsistency in the standards for Atomic Safety Licensing Board certifications and referrals to the Commission and Commission review of these issues. Section 2.323(f) currently allows a presiding officer to refer a ruling to the Commission if prompt decision is

necessary to prevent detriment to the public interest or unusual delay or expense, or if the presiding officer determines that the decision or ruling involves a novel issue that merits Commission review at the earliest opportunity. Current Sec. 2.341(f) states that referred or certified rulings ``will be reviewed'' by the Commission only if the referral or certification ``raises significant and novel legal or policy issues, and resolution of the issues would materially advance the orderly disposition of the proceeding'' (emphasis added). This language has been interpreted as allowing the Commission to accept referrals or certifications only if both standards in Sec. 2.341(f) are met, even though Sec. 2.323(f) allows a presiding officer to refer or certify a question or ruling if either of the comparable criteria in Sec. 2.323(f) is met. Tennessee Valley Authority (Bellefonte Nuclear Power Plant, Units 3 and 4), CLI-09-3, 69 NRC 68, 72 (2009). The proposed revision to Sec. 2.341(f) would provide the Commission with maximum flexibility by allowing, but not requiring, the Commission to review an issue if it raises significant legal or policy issues, or if resolution of the issue would materially advance the orderly disposition of the proceeding, or if both standards are met.

12. Section 2.346--Authority of the Secretary.

Currently, Sec. 2.346(j) authorizes the Secretary to ``[t]ake action on minor procedural matters.'' Since 2004, experience with the subpart C hearing procedures has shown that greater efficiencies could be achieved if the Secretary is given explicit authority to take action on more than minor procedural matters. The NRC is therefore proposing to authorize the Secretary to ``take action on procedural or other minor matters.'' This change would allow the Secretary to take action on a variety of non-substantive

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procedural matters, such as motions raising matters that do not explicitly fit within the Secretary's existing authority (e.g., a motion to suspend a hearing notice or the unopposed withdrawal of construction and operating license applications). Time is frequently of the essence on some minor matters; requiring Commission orders and affirmation sessions can sometimes result in undesirable delay in issuing needed procedural directives because of the need to schedule affirmation sessions. Accordingly, the NRC is proposing to amend Sec. 2.346(j) to give the Secretary the authority to ``take action on procedural or other minor matters.'' The NRC is also proposing removing the reference to Sec. 2.311 in paragraph (e). Requests for review under Sec. 2.311 are termed ``appeals'' rather than ``petitions for review.'' Moreover, there are no deadlines for Commission action on appeals under Sec. 2.311.

13. Section 2.347--Ex parte communications.

Section 2.347 prohibits what are known as ex parte communications between persons outside the NRC and NRC adjudicatory personnel on matters relevant to the merits of an ongoing hearing; this section currently applies to Sec. 2.204 demands for information. Unlike the NRC actions subject to Sec. Sec. 2.104(a), 2.105(e)(2), 2.202(c), 2.205(e) and 2.312 (which would continue to be referenced in Sec. 2.347(e)(1)(i) and (ii)), hearing rights do not attach to a demand for information because it is not an order; it is a pre-enforcement document requesting information. 56 FR 40663, 40670, 40682; August 15, 1991. The NRC is therefore proposing to amend the ex parte communication provisions in Sec. 2.347(e)(1)(i) and (ii) by deleting

the two references to Sec. 2.204. Formerly, Sec. 2.204 pertained to orders for modification of licenses and orders to show cause, and these orders did involve the right to a hearing. (50 FR 38113; September 20, 1985). Thus, when Sec. 2.780--the precursor to Sec. 2.347--was established in 1988, the references to Sec. 2.204 were proper. But in 1991 the references became erroneous when the provisions for orders for modification of licenses were deleted and replaced by the Sec. 2.204 provisions regarding demands for information. Accordingly, the NRC is proposing conforming changes to Sec. 2.347(e)(1)(i) and (ii).

14. Section 2.348--Separation of functions.

The separation of functions provisions in Sec. 2.348 prohibit certain communications between specified sets of NRC personnel on matters relevant to the merits of an ongoing adjudicatory hearing. Similar to the Sec. 2.347 proposal discussed above, the NRC is proposing to correct the separation of functions provisions in Sec. 2.348(d)(1)(i) and (ii) by deleting the two references to Sec. 2.204. As explained above, unlike the other specified NRC actions, hearing rights do not attach to a demand for information. When Sec. 2.781--the precursor to Sec. 2.348--was established in 1988, the references to Sec. 2.204 were proper. But the references became erroneous in 1991 for the reasons stated above with respect to Sec. 2.347(e)(1)(i) and (ii). Accordingly, the NRC is now proposing the conforming changes to Sec. 2.348(d)(1)(i) and (ii).

C. Subpart G--Sections 2.700 through 2.713

1. Section 2.704--Discovery--required disclosures.

Sections 2.704(a) through (c) set forth the required disclosures that parties other than the NRC staff must make in formal NRC adjudications. To conform with the timing provisions of Sec. 2.336(d), a change in Sec. 2.704(a)(3) is being proposed. Presently, Sec. 2.704(a)(3) requires that the initial disclosures be made within 45 days after a prehearing conference order following the initial prehearing conference specified in Sec. 2.329. And Sec. 2.704(e) requires a party that has made a disclosure under Sec. 2.704 to supplement its disclosure if the party learns that in some material respect the information disclosed was incomplete or incorrect (provided the additional or new information was not made available to other parties during the discovery process or in writing). In addition, with respect to the testimony of an expert from whom a report is required under Sec. 2.704(b), the duty to supplement under Sec. 2.704(e) extends to both the information contained in the report and provided through a deposition of the expert. The proposed Sec. 2.704(a)(3) would require that unless otherwise stipulated or directed by order of the presiding officer, a party's initial disclosures must be made within 30 days of the order granting a hearing and that parties must provide disclosure updates every 30 days. Each update would include documents subject to disclosure under this section that have not been disclosed in a prior update, and that are developed, obtained, or discovered during the period that runs from the last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update.

2. Section 2.705--Discovery--additional methods.

Section 2.705(b)(2) allows the presiding officer to ``alter the limits in these rules on the number of depositions and interrogatories.'' But the rules do not limit the number of depositions or interrogatories. The NRC is therefore proposing to amend this section to allow the presiding officer to set reasonable limits on the

number of interrogatories and depositions. This proposed change would remove the confusion in this section and improve the efficiency of NRC adjudicatory proceedings.

3. Sections 2.709--Discovery against NRC staff and 2.336--General Discovery.

a. Sections 2.709(a)(6)--Required initial disclosures in enforcement proceedings and 2.336--General Discovery.

The NRC is proposing to amend the NRC staff's mandatory disclosure obligations for enforcement proceedings conducted under subpart G of 10 CFR part 2. The current regulation that applies to these proceedings, Sec. 2.336, requires the disclosure of documents that are outside of the scope of the enforcement proceeding, which results in the inclusion of many unrelated documents in the mandatory disclosures. Therefore, the NRC is proposing to amend Sec. 2.336(b) to remove subpart G enforcement proceedings from the general discovery requirements; a corresponding amendment would be made to Sec. 2.709 to specify the staff's disclosure obligations in a subpart G enforcement proceeding. This amended section would limit the scope of the staff's disclosures to documents relevant to disputed issues alleged with particularity in the pleadings. Not only would these amended disclosure requirements benefit the NRC staff (by reducing the resources necessary to review, prepare, and provide the required documents), but they would also aid the other parties to the proceeding (by reducing the number of documents they need to review to only documents that are relevant to the issues in the proceeding).

Further, this disclosure requirement would parallel the initial document disclosure requirement in Sec. 2.704(a)(2) for parties other than the NRC staff. Although parties other than the NRC staff are also required by Sec. 2.704(a)(1) to identify individuals likely to have discoverable information relevant to disputed issues, the NRC considers a similar disclosure requirement for the NRC staff to be unnecessary. The discoverable portions of any pertinent Office of Investigations report or related inspection report should identify many of the individuals likely to have discoverable information relevant to disputed issues.

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Proposed Sec. 2.709(a)(6)(i) would also require that if a claim of privilege or protected status is made by the NRC staff for any documents, a list of these documents must be provided with sufficient information for assessing the claim of privilege or protected status. Finally, proposed Sec. 2.709(a)(6)(ii) would require the NRC staff to provide disclosure updates every 30 days. Each update would include documents subject to disclosure under this section that have not been disclosed in a prior update and that are developed, obtained, or discovered during the period that runs from 5 business days before the last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update, as would be required of other parties by proposed Sec. 2.704(a)(3).

b. Section 2.709(a)(7)--Form and type of NRC staff disclosures.

Proposed Sec. 2.709(a)(7) would specify the manner in which the NRC staff may disclose information in subpart G proceedings. For publicly available documents, data compilations, or other tangible things, the NRC staff's duty to disclose such information to the other parties and the presiding officer would be met by identifying the location, the title, and a page reference to the subject information.

If the publicly available documents, data compilations, or other tangible things can be accessed at either the NRC Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov>, or at the NRC Public Document Room, the staff would provide the parties and the presiding officer with any citations necessary to access this information. This addition parallels Sec. 2.704(a)(2) for disclosures by parties other than the NRC Staff.

D. Subpart L--Sections 2.1200 Through 2.1213

1. Subpart L--Title.

Subpart L of 10 CFR part 2 contains the adjudicatory procedures that the NRC uses to conduct most of its licensing proceedings. The procedures in subpart L were substantially revised in 2004 (69 FR 2182; January 14, 2004), and are intended to be used with the generally applicable provisions in subpart C of 10 CFR part 2. Under the provisions of 10 CFR part 2 as revised in 2004, a hearing conducted under subpart L meets the APA requirements for an ``on the record'' or ``formal'' hearing. *Citizens Awareness Network, Inc. v. NRC*, 391 F.3d 338, 351 (2004). This is true despite the fact that the NRC also provides more formal adjudicatory procedures under subpart G of part 2. However, the title of subpart L was not revised in 2004 to reflect the changed (i.e., less formal) character of its procedures. To eliminate any confusion caused by the current title of subpart L, the NRC proposes to revise the title of subpart L to ``Simplified Hearing Procedures for NRC Adjudications.'' The revised title would reflect that these proceedings are less formal than the formal part 2 subpart G hearings, but are still formal ``on the record'' hearings under the APA, and not ``informal'' hearings as might be inferred from the current title.

2. Section 2.1202--Authority and role of NRC staff.

Section 2.1202 pertains to the authority and role of the NRC staff in less formal hearings. The introductory text of Sec. 2.1202(a) could be erroneously interpreted as suggesting that the staff is required to advise the presiding officer on the merits of contested matters. The NRC proposes to revise Sec. 2.1202(a) to require that in subpart L proceedings the staff's notice to parties regarding relevant staff licensing actions must include an explanation of why both the public health and safety is protected and the action is in accord with the common defense and security, despite the ``pendency of the contested matter before the presiding officer.''

A conforming change to the introductory text of Sec. 2.1403(a) also is being proposed to require the NRC staff to provide this explanation when the same situation arises in subpart N proceedings.

3. Sections 2.1205 and 2.710--Summary disposition; Motions for summary disposition; Authority of the presiding officer to dispose of certain issues on the pleadings.

The summary disposition motion requirements in Sec. 2.1205 do not require the inclusion of a statement of material facts. Before the 2004 amendments to 10 CFR part 2, the NRC's requirements governing motions for summary disposition required these motions to be accompanied by a ``separate, short and concise statement of material facts as to which the moving party contends that there is no genuine issue to be heard.''

When the summary disposition motion requirements were included in the hearing procedures in 10 CFR part 2, subpart L, the requirement for a statement of material facts was inadvertently omitted from Sec. 2.1205. Proposed Sec. 2.1205 would restore the requirement for a statement of material facts for which the moving party contends that

there is no genuine issue. This section would not include the requirement for a ``separate'' statement of material facts in dispute, as the rule already requires that the statement be ``attached'' to the motion. The NRC is proposing a conforming change to Sec. 2.710 to remove the word, ``separate,'' which would ensure that Sec. Sec. 2.710 and 2.1205 are identical in this regard.

4. Section 2.1209--Findings of fact and conclusions of law.

Section 2.712(c) specifies the format for proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law in subpart G proceedings, but a similar format provision does not exist in subpart L. The NRC, therefore, is proposing to amend Sec. 2.1209 by adding the format requirements now contained in Sec. 2.712(c). These format requirements would aid presiding officers in subpart L proceedings by ensuring that proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law clearly and precisely communicate the parties' positions on the material issues in the proceeding, with exact citations to the factual record.

5. Section 2.1213--No significant hazards consideration determinations not subject to stay provisions.

The proposed amendment to Sec. 2.1213 would add a new paragraph (f). The proposed paragraph would exclude from the stay provisions matters limited to whether a no significant hazards consideration determination for a power reactor license amendment was proper. No significant hazards consideration determinations may be made in license amendment proceedings for production or utilization facilities that are subject to the 10 CFR part 50 requirements; challenges to these determinations are not allowed in accordance with 10 CFR 50.58(b)(6). Excluding no significant hazards consideration determinations from the stay provisions also is consistent with Federal case law holding that these findings are final agency actions, which are not appealable to the Commission. *Center for Nuclear Responsibility, Inc. v. U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Comm'n*, 586 F.Supp. 579, 580-81 (D.DC 1984).

E. Subpart M--Sections 2.1300 Through 2.1331

The following changes are being proposed to subpart M of 10 CFR part 2, which sets forth the procedures that are applicable to hearings on license transfer applications.

1. Sections 2.1300 and 2.1304--Provisions governing hearing procedures for subpart M hearings.

Section 2.1300 states that the provisions of subpart M, together with subpart C, govern all adjudicatory proceedings on license transfers, but current Sec. 2.1304 states that the procedures in subpart M ``will constitute the exclusive basis for hearings on license transfer applications.'' Section 2.1304, part of the original subpart M, was effectively replaced by Sec. 2.1300 in

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the 2004 part 2 revisions, and could have been removed as part of that rulemaking. The NRC is now proposing to remove Sec. 2.1304 and amend Sec. 2.1300 to clarify that, in subpart M hearings on license transfers, both the generally applicable intervention provisions in subpart C and the specific subpart M hearing procedures govern.

2. Section 2.1316--Authority and role of NRC staff.

Section 2.1316(c) provides the procedures for the NRC staff to participate as a party in subpart M hearings. These procedures would be updated to mirror the requirements of Sec. 2.1202(b)(2) and (3), which

set forth the NRC staff's authority and role in subpart L hearings. Proposed Sec. 2.1316(c)(1) would require the NRC staff--within 15 days of the issuance of an order granting requests for hearing or petitions to intervene and admitting contentions--to notify the presiding officer and the parties whether it desires to participate as a party in the proceeding. If the staff decides to participate as a party, its notice would identify the contentions on which it will participate as a party. If the NRC staff later desires to be a party, the NRC staff would notify the presiding officer and the parties, and identify the contentions on which it wished to participate as a party, and would make the disclosures required by Sec. 2.336(b)(3) through (5) unless accompanied by an affidavit explaining why the disclosures cannot be provided to the parties with the notice. Once the NRC staff chooses to participate as a party in a subpart M license transfer proceeding, it would have all the rights and responsibilities of a party with respect to the admitted contention or matter in controversy on which the staff chose to participate. As with Sec. 2.1202, ``the NRC staff must take the proceeding in whatever posture the hearing may be at the time that it chooses to participate as a party.'' (69 FR 2228; January 14, 2004).

F. Subpart N--Sections 2.1400 Through 2.1407

Section 2.1407--Appeal and Commission review of initial decision.

Current Sec. 2.1407(a)(1) allows parties to appeal orders of the presiding officer to the Commission within 15 days after the service of the order. Similarly, Sec. 2.1407(a)(3) allows parties that are opposed to an appeal to file a brief in opposition within 15 days of the filing of the appeal. Experience has demonstrated that the time the NRC's rules allow for appeals from an order of a presiding officer is unnecessarily short, and sometimes results in superficial appellate briefs. Most adjudicatory bodies allow substantially more time for litigants to frame appellate arguments and to perform the necessary research and analysis. Well-considered briefs enable the appellate body, here the Commission, to make faster and better-reasoned decisions. The NRC is therefore proposing to extend the time to file an appeal and a brief in opposition to an appeal from 15 to 25 days. The NRC does not expect the proposed change in appeal deadlines to result in any delays in licensing. For one thing, higher-quality briefs should expedite appellate decision-making. Moreover, most of the appellate litigation at the NRC is preliminary to any final licensing decisions; it takes place before the NRC staff finishes its safety and environmental reviews and generally does not affect the timing of those reviews.

G. Other Changes

1. Section 2.4--Definitions.

The current definition of ``Participant'' applies to an ``individual or organization,'' and does not explicitly apply to governmental entities that have petitioned to intervene in a proceeding. The NRC proposes to correct this definition by adding a parenthetical reference to ``individual or organization'' so that it reads: ``individual or organization (including governmental entities).''

The current definition of ``NRC personnel'' in Sec. 2.4 contains outdated references to Sec. Sec. 2.336 and 2.1018. The proposed revision of ``NRC personnel'' would update this definition by removing

references to Sec. Sec. 2.336 and 2.1018, neither of which references the term ``NRC personnel.''

2. Section 2.101--Filing of application.

In 2005, Sec. 2.101 was amended to remove paragraph (e) and redesignate (f) and (g) as paragraphs (e) and (f). (70 FR 61887; October 27, 2005) The internal references to paragraph (g) were not updated to reflect the new paragraph designations. References in this section to Sec. 2.101(g) would be corrected to reference Sec. 2.101(f). There are no references to former Sec. 2.101(f) in this section.

3. Section 2.105--Notice of proposed action.

Proposed Sec. 2.105 would make three changes to the current regulation: (1) The introductory text of paragraph (a) would be revised by inserting a reference to the NRC's Web site; (2) The introductory text of paragraph (b) would be clarified by specifying that the referenced notice pertains to one published in the Federal Register; and, (3) The introductory text of paragraph (d) would be corrected to reference the time period stated in Sec. 2.309(b).

4. Section 2.802--Petition for rulemaking.

The proposed Sec. 2.802(d), in accordance with the proposed definition of ``Participant'' in Sec. 2.4 and the proposed amendment to the procedures for challenging the NRC's regulations in Sec. 2.335, would replace the word ``party'' with ``participant.''

5. Corrections of other outdated and incorrect references.

Section 51.102(c) contains an outdated reference to ``Subpart G of Part 2.''. The reference would be corrected to refer generally to part 2. Also, the reference to the former Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board would be removed from Sec. 51.102.

Sections 51.4, 51.34, 51.109(f), and 51.125 contain outdated references to the former Appeal Board, which would be removed from these sections.

6. Section 54.27--Hearings.

Section 54.27 (pertaining to license renewal hearings for nuclear power reactors) contains an outdated reference to a 30-day period to request a hearing. As discussed in the 2004 part 2 revisions, except for license transfer and HLW proceedings, the time in which to request a hearing was extended to 60 days from the date a notice of opportunity for hearing is published (either in the Federal Register or on the NRC's Web site). (January 4, 2004; 69 FR 2200). The proposed Sec. 54.27 would be corrected to reflect the proper 60-day period to request a hearing, and a reference to 10 CFR 2.309 would be added. The proposed Sec. 54.27 would retain the provision that in the absence of any hearing requests, a renewed operating license may be issued without a hearing upon 30-day notice and publication in the Federal Register.

7. Part 2--Rules of Practice for Domestic Licensing Proceedings and Issuance of Orders.

Throughout 10 CFR part 2, the terms ``Presiding Officer'' and ``presiding officer'' are used interchangeably, but with different capitalization, unlike 10 CFR part 51, which uses the term ``presiding officer'' uniformly without capitalization. This proposed rule would change all references to the term ``Presiding Officer'' to ``presiding officer'' to bring 10 CFR part 2 into conformance with 10 CFR part 51.

VI. Additional Issues for Public Comment

A. Scope of Mandatory Disclosures

Section 2.336 contains the general procedures governing disclosure of information before a hearing in

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contested NRC adjudicatory proceedings. The NRC is soliciting public comment on whether it should revise the Sec. 2.336 mandatory disclosures to focus the staff's disclosure obligations under Sec. 2.336(b)(3) on documents related to the parties' admitted contentions. Section 2.336(b) contains the NRC staff's mandatory disclosure obligations. Specifically, under Sec. 2.336(b)(3) the NRC staff must disclose all documents supporting the staff's review of the application or proposed action that is the subject of the proceeding without regard to whether the documents are relevant to the admitted contentions.

The 2004 revision to part 2 imposed mandatory disclosure provisions on all parties that were intended to reduce the overall discovery burden in NRC adjudicatory proceedings. The NRC is concerned that this has not been the case and that the overall discovery burden has not been reduced. The NRC believes that the primary source of the burden stems from the disclosure of hundreds or thousands of documents by the NRC staff that are unrelated to any admitted contention; disclosure of voluminous material by the staff also burdens other parties to the proceeding with searching through hundreds or thousands of unrelated documents to find the material that is relevant to the issues in dispute (other parties' disclosures are already limited to documents relevant to the admitted contentions; the staff's disclosures are not).

All parties also are required to produce privilege logs (a list of discoverable documents that are not being disclosed because the party asserts a privilege to protect the documents). Due to the large number of documents that are captured by the current regulations, the NRC staff must prepare a log of privileged documents, most of which are entirely unrelated to the contentions. Limiting the disclosure obligations to the issues in dispute would reduce the number of documents produced by the NRC staff, and also would provide the other parties to the proceeding with a list of relevant documents that were withheld, which would make it easier for the parties to identify any withheld documents that they may seek to obtain. This change would also align the scope of the NRC staff's disclosure obligations with those of the other parties to the proceeding. At the same time, the parties' opportunity to obtain publicly available documents would not be affected, as these proposed changes would not affect the full scope of documents that will be available to parties and other members of the public through ADAMS.

The NRC is also seeking comments on whether it should add a new requirement to the end of Sec. 2.336(d) to clarify that the duty of mandatory disclosure with respect to new information or documents relevant to a contention ends when the presiding officer issues a decision on that contention or when specified by the presiding officer or the Commission.

1. Specific Questions for Public Comment

(a) Would applying NRC staff disclosures under Sec. 2.336(b)(3) to documents related only to the admitted contentions aid parties other than the NRC staff by reducing the scope of documents they receive and review through the mandatory disclosures?

(b) Is the broad disclosure obligation imposed on the NRC staff by current Section 2.336(b) warranted in light of (a) the other parties' more limited disclosure obligations and (b) the parties' ability to

find these same documents in an ADAMS search?

(c) Would a shorter, more relevant privilege log aid parties to the proceeding?

(d) Would potential parties prefer to maintain the status quo?

(e) Would limiting the mandatory disclosures of documents as described in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(a)(1)(A)(ii) be the preferred option?

2. Draft Rule Text That Would Limit the Scope of NRC Staff's Mandatory Disclosures

Except for proceedings conducted under subpart J of this part (or as otherwise ordered by the Commission, the presiding officer, or the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board assigned to the proceeding), the NRC staff must, within 30 days of the issuance of the order granting a request for hearing or petition to intervene and without further order or request from any party, disclose and make available the following documents:

[cir] The application and applicant or licensee requests associated with the application or proposed action that is the subject of the proceeding;

[cir] NRC correspondence (including e-mail) with the applicant or licensee associated with the application or proposed action that is the subject of the proceeding;

[cir] All documents (including documents that provide support for, or opposition to, the application or proposed action) supporting the NRC staff's review of the application or proposed action that are relevant to the contentions that have been admitted into the proceeding;

[cir] Any NRC staff documents (except those documents for which there is a claim of privilege or protected status) representing the NRC staff's determination on the application or proposal that is the subject of the proceeding. Documents representing the NRC staff's determination include published NRC reports and published draft or final environmental impact statements or environmental assessments; and

[cir] A list of all otherwise-discoverable documents for which a claim of privilege or protected status is being made, together with sufficient information for assessing the claim of privilege or protected status of the documents.

B. Alternative Approaches on Interlocutory Appeals

The NRC is seeking public comments as to whether to amend 10 CFR part 2 regarding interlocutory review of rulings by a presiding officer granting or denying a request for hearing or intervention petition, including late-filed requests or petitions. Currently, Sec. 2.311(c) effectively allows the requestor or petitioner to appeal an order wholly denying an intervention petition or request for hearing. Therefore, if the presiding officer grants the intervention petition and denies the admissibility of one or more proposed contentions, the petitioner may not appeal the denial of any proposed contentions until the presiding officer issues a final decision at the end of the proceeding. Conversely, any party other than the petitioner may immediately appeal the order on the grounds that the requestor or petitioner lacks standing or that all of their proposed contentions were inadmissible. Although this basic scheme for interlocutory review of intervention petitions and requests for hearing has been in place since 1972 (see 37 FR 28710; December 29, 1972), there have been some suggestions that a change to the current practice might be warranted to

either provide earlier appellate review of contention admissibility or, alternatively, to discourage frivolous appeals. The NRC is considering two options for a potential amendment. The NRC requests comment on the options and on the possible rule language that would implement each option, including comments on the resource implications of both options for all parties and for the Commission.

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Option 1

The first option would amend Sec. 2.311(c) and (d) to allow any party to appeal an order granting a request for hearing or petition to intervene in whole or in part within 25 days of the presiding officer's issuance of the order. This amendment would effectively allow all parties to immediately appeal rulings on the admissibility of any particular contention (including late-filed contentions).

The potential advantage of amending Sec. 2.311 is that it allows early resolution of contention admissibility issues. Specifically, it eliminates the possibility that, after a Board has issued its final order in the proceeding, the Commission on appeal will remand the proceeding to the Board for consideration of a contention that the Commission has determined should have been admitted and thereby prolong the proceeding. Consistent with the general principles applied by courts and agencies that favor limited interlocutory review, the disadvantages of departing from the current practice under Sec. 2.311 include the potential increase in the Commission's appellate workload at the early stage of a proceeding and the attention given to matters that it may prove unnecessary to address at all if a party decides not to pursue the matter at the conclusion of the proceeding or if further developments, such as settlement, obviate the need to address the admissibility question. This amendment would not alter a party's ability to appeal orders on the question of standing.

Option 2

The second option would delete Sec. 2.311(d)(1) in order to remove the right of parties other than the petitioner to appeal orders granting an intervention petition. This would leave all parties with the same appellate rights, including the right to seek interlocutory review under Sec. 2.341(f)(2). The potential advantage of this option is that it would reduce the Commission's appellate workload by removing any incentive for parties other than the petitioner to oppose all proffered contentions solely to preserve their right to appeal. The main disadvantage would be removing the means by which an early determination can be made as to the proper admission of some contentions.

VII. Section-by-Section Analysis

A. Introductory Provisions--Sections 2.1 Through 2.8

Section 2.4--Definitions.

This section would modify the definition of Participant in Sec. 2.4, which currently applies to individuals or organizations that petition to intervene or request a hearing, but are not yet parties. The new definition would clarify that any individual or organization--including States, local governments, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribes--that petitions to intervene or requests a hearing shall be considered a participant. Further, Federally-recognized Indian Tribes

do not have to be ``affected'' Federally-recognized Indian Tribes to participate in NRC licensing actions. ``Affected'' is reserved for Federally-recognized Indian Tribes that seek to participate in the high-level waste proceeding; it does not apply to the NRC's other licensing actions. The current definition also indicates that States, local governmental bodies, or affected Federally-recognized Indian Tribes that seek to participate under Sec. 2.315(c) shall be considered participants. This section does not grant these governmental bodies Sec. 2.315(c) participant status; this status is only obtained when the interested governmental body is afforded the opportunity to participate in the proceeding by the presiding officer. Governmental bodies that have requested Sec. 2.315(c) participant status, but have not yet been granted or denied such status by the presiding officer, are only entitled to participate in a proceeding as a Sec. 2.4 participant. This section also would modify the definition of ``NRC personnel,'' which contains outdated references to Sec. Sec. 2.336 and 2.1018; the proposed revision would remove these references.''

B. Subpart A--Sections 2.100 Through 2.111

1. Section 2.101--Filing of application.

This section would be amended to correct references to Sec. 2.101(g), which should reference Sec. 2.101(f). These changes would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

2. Section 2.105--Notice of proposed action.

This section would be updated to include a reference to the NRC's Web site. Paragraph (b) of this section would be updated to clarify that the referenced ``notice'' is one that is published in the Federal Register, and paragraph (d) would be amended to include a reference to the time period included in Sec. 2.309(b).

C. Subpart C--Sections 2.300 Through 2.390

1. Section 2.305--Service of documents; methods; proof.

Section 2.305, which currently requires any paper served in an NRC proceeding to include a signed certificate of service, would be amended to clarify that a signed certificate of service must be filed with any document filed with the NRC. Under Sec. 2.304(d)(1) persons submitting electronic documents to the NRC through the E-Filing system do not need to physically sign their documents; signature with a participant's digital ID certificate satisfies the requirement that a document be signed.

Section 2.305(g)(1), which does not currently provide an address for service upon the NRC staff when a filing is not being made through the E-Filing system and no attorney representing the NRC staff has filed a notice of appearance, would be updated to provide participants with an address to use in these circumstances.

2. Section 2.309--Hearing requests, petitions to intervene, requirements for standing, and contentions.

a. Section 2.309(b)--Timing.

Section 2.309(b), which does not provide a time for answers to Sec. 2.205(c) orders, would be amended to clarify that recipients of Sec. 2.205(c) orders have the time specified in the order to file their answers.

b. Section 2.309(c) and (f)--Subsequent Submission of Petition/Request or New or Amended Contentions.

Section 2.309(c) would be updated to consolidate the nontimely

filing requirements and to clarify the intent of the regulations. Amended Sec. 2.309(c) would incorporate the Sec. 2.309(f)(2)(i) through (iii) factors into amended Sec. 2.309(c)(2)(i) through (iii) as the factors to be considered in evaluating a filing after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b). Thus, unlike the current requirement where both the Sec. 2.309(c) and Sec. 2.309(f)(2) factors must be individually addressed, the proposed amendment incorporates the Sec. 2.309(f)(2) factors into amended Sec. 2.309(c)(2)(i) through (iii). Meeting these three factors would provide sufficient justification for the filing after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b). Section 2.309(c)(2)(i) would require the requestor or petitioner to demonstrate that the information upon which the new or amended contention is based was not previously available. The phrase ``not previously available'' in this paragraph means that a requestor or petitioner cannot base a contention on a document or a report that does not yet exist. For example, if at the time of requestor or petitioner's filing, an agency or organization was working on a report scheduled for publication in six months, the requestor or petitioner could not anticipate this publication and rely on the report in the submission

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of contentions. Also, Sec. 2.309(c)(2)(ii) would require the information that supports the filing after the deadlines in Sec. 2.309(b) to be materially different from information previously available. And Sec. 2.309(c)(2)(iii) would require a requestor or petitioner to submit this filing in a timely fashion based on the availability of the subsequent information. But this interpretation does not mean that a petitioner or requestor could not submit a filing after the publication of a report, provided that the report contains information that meets both the filing criteria in Sec. 2.309(c) and the admissibility criteria in Sec. 2.309(f).

Section 2.309(c)(3) would clarify that any new or amended intervention petition must include new or amended contentions if the petitioner seeks admission as a party, and requires a petitioner to meet the standing and admissibility requirements in Sec. Sec. 2.309(d) and (f); a petitioner that has already satisfied the Sec. 2.309(d) standing requirements would not have to do so again.

Section 2.309(c)(4) would require any new or amended contentions filed by a party to meet the admissibility requirements in Sec. 2.309(f), and would clarify that a party or a participant who has already demonstrated standing does not need to satisfy the standing requirements in Sec. 2.309(d) again.

Section 2.309(c)(5) would clarify that new or amended contentions arising under the National Environmental Policy Act also must meet the filing requirements of Sec. 2.309(c)(1) through (c)(2).

c. Section 2.309(h)--Requirements applicable to States, local governmental bodies, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribes seeking party status.

Paragraphs (d)(2)(i) and (ii) apply only to ``affected'' Federally-recognized Indian Tribes, which is only proper in the context of a high-level radioactive waste disposal proceeding. Proposed Sec. 2.309(h), which is the current Sec. 2.309(d)(2), would be revised to clarify that, in the case of Sec. 2.309(h)(1) and (2), any Federally-recognized Indian Tribe that wishes to participate in any potential proceeding for a facility located within its boundaries does not need to further establish its standing. Section 2.309(h)(3), which is the

current Sec. 2.309(d)(2)(iii), would only apply to a high-level waste disposal proceeding and would retain the references to affected Federally-recognized Indian Tribes; the references in this section would mirror the language used in the Sec. 2.1001 definition of Party.

3. Section 2.311--Interlocutory review of rulings on requests for hearings/petitions to intervene, selection of hearing procedures, and requests by potential parties for access to sensitive unclassified non-safeguards information and safeguards information.

Proposed Sec. 2.311(b) would extend the time to file an appeal and a brief in opposition to an appeal from ten to 25 days.

4. Section 2.314--Appearance and practice before the Commission in adjudicatory proceedings.

Proposed Sec. 2.314(c)(3) would extend the time to file an appeal to an order disciplining a party from ten to 25 days.

5. Section 2.315--Participation by a person not a party.

Proposed Sec. 2.315(c) would clarify that interested States, local government bodies, and Federally-recognized Tribes, who are not parties admitted to a hearing under Sec. 2.309 and seek to participate in the hearing, must take the proceeding as they find it. Consistent with NRC case-law, Sec. 2.315(c) participants would not be able to raise issues related to contentions or issues that were resolved prior to their entry as Sec. 2.315(c) participants in the proceeding--if a State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe chooses to participate in a proceeding late in the process, their participation is subject to any orders already issued and should not interfere with the schedule established for the proceeding.

6. Section 2.319--Power of the presiding officer.

Proposed Sec. 2.319(r) would reincorporate former Sec. 2.1014(h) without any changes to the original language or intent. This section would require that an admitted contention that constitutes pure issues of law, as determined by the presiding officer, must be decided on the basis of briefs or oral argument.

7. Section 2.323--Motions.

Proposed Sec. 2.323(f) would allow the presiding officer to independently, or in response to a petition from a party, certify questions or refer rulings to the Commission if the issue satisfies one of the two Sec. 2.323(f)(1) criteria. In each case, the presiding officer would make the initial determination as to whether the issue or petition raises significant and novel legal or policy issues, or if prompt decision by the Commission is necessary to materially advance the orderly disposition of the proceeding.

8. Section 2.335--Consideration of Commission rules and regulations in adjudicatory proceedings.

Section 2.335 limits the requests for waivers or exceptions from NRC regulations to parties to a proceeding. Proposed Sec. 2.335 would clarify that participants to an adjudicatory proceeding, including petitioners, may seek a waiver or exception to the NRC's regulations for a particular proceeding. This change would adopt the NRC's practice of allowing petitions to intervene and requests for hearing to contain Sec. 2.335 requests for waivers or exceptions from the NRC's regulations.

9. Section 2.336--General Discovery.

This section, which currently requires an update within 14 days of obtaining or discovering disclosable material, would be amended to require the filing of a mandatory disclosure update every 30 days. These updates would include all disclosable documents and information developed during the period that runs from five business days before

the last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update. Parties not disclosing any documents or information are expected to file an update informing the presiding officer and the other parties that no documents or information are being disclosed. The duty of mandatory disclosure with respect to new information or documents relevant to a contention would end when the presiding officer issues a decision on that contention, or as specified by the presiding officer or the Commission.

10. Section 2.340--Initial decision in certain contested proceedings; immediate effectiveness of initial decisions; issuance of authorizations, permits, and licenses.

Proposed Sec. 2.340 would clarify that in some circumstances the NRC may act on a license, a renewed license, or on a license amendment prior to the completion of any contested hearing.

Paragraphs (a) and (b) concern construction and operating licenses, renewed licenses, combined licenses, and amendments to these licenses. These paragraphs would be amended to clarify that, in the case of a license amendment involving a power reactor, the NRC may complete action on the amendment request without waiting for the presiding officer's initial decision once the NRC makes a determination that the amendment involves no significant hazards consideration. In initial power reactor licensing cases and in cases where the NRC has not made a determination of no significant hazards consideration, these paragraphs would be amended to clarify that the NRC may not act on the application until the presiding officer issues an initial decision in the contested proceeding.

Paragraph (c), which deals with initial decisions under 10 CFR 52.103(g), would be amended to clarify that the presiding officer may make findings of

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fact and conclusions of law on the matters put into controversy by the parties, and any matter designated by the Commission to be decided by the presiding officer. Further, the amended paragraph would clarify that matters not put into controversy by the parties shall be referred to the Commission for its consideration. The Commission could, in its discretion, treat any of these referred matters as a request for action under Sec. 2.206 and would process the matter in accordance with Sec. 52.103(f).

Paragraphs (d) and (e), which concern manufacturing licenses under 10 CFR part 52 and proceedings not involving production or utilization facilities, would be amended to clarify that the NRC will issue, deny, or condition any permit, license, or amendment in accordance with a presiding officer's initial decision. These paragraphs also would be amended to clarify that the NRC may issue a license amendment before a presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective.

This proposed revision would clarify that in all cases the presiding officer is limited to matters placed into controversy by the parties, and serious matters not put into controversy by the parties that concern safety, common defense and security, or the environment and that are referred to, and consideration of which is approved by, the Commission.

11. Section 2.341--Review of decisions and actions of a presiding officer.

a. Extension of time to file a petition for review, answer, and reply.

Proposed Sec. 2.341(b) would extend the time to file a petition for review and an answer to a petition from 15 to 25 days, and the time to file a reply to an answer from five to ten days.

b. Petitions for Commission review not acted upon deemed denied.

Section 2.341 would reincorporate the ``deemed denied'' provision of former Sec. 2.786(c), with an additional 90 days for Commission review before petitions for review are deemed denied. The additional 90 days would allow the Commission 120 days of review time before a petition for review is deemed denied.

Similarly, the time for the Commission to act on a decision of a presiding officer or a petition for review would be expanded to 120 days to bring this section into alignment with the new timeline in proposed Sec. 2.341(c)(1).

c. Interlocutory review.

Section 2.341(f) would allow, but not require, the Commission to review certifications or referrals that meet any of the standards in this paragraph.

12. Section 2.346--Authority of the Secretary.

This proposed section would make explicit the Secretary's authority under Sec. 2.346(j), which is currently limited to minor procedural matters, to include non-minor procedural matters--such as the unopposed withdrawal of construction and operating license applications--which would avoid the need for formal Commission orders and affirmation sessions to issue procedural directives. Also, the reference in paragraph (e) to Sec. 2.311 has been removed because appeals under Sec. 2.311 do not have, associated with them, deadlines for Commission action.

13. Sections 2.347 and 2.348--Ex parte communications; Separation of functions.

These sections currently reference Sec. 2.204 demands for information, which are not orders and do not entail hearing rights. Because demands for information are not adjudicatory matters, the restrictions on ex parte communications and the separation of functions limitations do not apply. The references to Sec. 2.204 would be removed from both sections.

D. Subpart G--Sections 2.700 Through 2.713

1. Section 2.704--Discovery--required disclosures.

This section, which currently requires initial disclosures to be made within 45 days after the issuance of a prehearing conference order following the initial prehearing conference, would be amended to require the filing of a mandatory disclosure update every 30 days. These updates would include all disclosable documents and information obtained up to 5 business days before the disclosure update. Any documents or information obtained or developed during the period that runs from the last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update would be included in the next update. Parties not disclosing any documents or information are expected to file an update informing the presiding officer and the other parties that no documents or information are being disclosed.

2. Section 2.705--Discovery--additional methods.

This section, which currently allows the presiding officer to ``alter the limits * * * on the number of depositions and interrogatories,'' would be amended to remove the impression that these rules impose a limit on the number of depositions and interrogatories--they do not. Instead, the new rule would clarify that the presiding

officer ``may set limits on the number of depositions and interrogatories.''

3. Section 2.709--Discovery against NRC staff.

a. Section 2.709(a)(6)--Initial disclosures.

This new paragraph would require the NRC staff to provide initial disclosures within 30 days of the order granting a hearing and without awaiting a discovery request. The NRC staff disclosures would include all NRC staff documents relevant to disputed issues alleged with particularity in the proceedings, including any Office of Investigations Report and supporting Exhibits, and any Office of Enforcement documents regarding the order. The staff would also be required to file a mandatory disclosure update every 30 days. These updates would include all disclosable documents and information obtained or developed during the period that runs from the last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update. Any documents or information obtained or developed during the period between the 5 business day cutoff and the update would be included in the next update. If the staff does not disclose any documents or information, it would be expected to file an update informing the presiding officer and the other parties that no documents or information are being disclosed. The staff also would be required to provide, with initial disclosures and disclosure updates, a privilege log listing the withheld documents that includes sufficient information to assess the claim of privilege or protected status. These requirements parallel the Sec. 2.704 requirements for parties other than the NRC staff.

b. Section 2.709(a)(7)--Form and type of NRC staff disclosures.

Section 2.709(a)(7) is a new paragraph that would allow the staff to satisfy its disclosure obligations for publicly available documents by providing the title, date, and NRC ADAMS accession number for the document. This change would mirror the procedures now used by parties other than the NRC staff to disclose publicly available documents.

4. Section 2.710--Motions for summary disposition.

This section would be amended to conform to the proposed amendments to Sec. 2.1205, which would require parties to attach a statement of material facts to a motion for summary disposition. This proposed change would have no effect on the current practice of including a statement of material facts with a motion; it would clarify that the statement needs to be attached to the motion and does not have to be ``separate.''

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E. Subpart H--Sections 2.800 Through 2.819

1. Section 2.802--Petition for rulemaking.

This section currently allows petitioners for a rulemaking to request the suspension of an adjudicatory proceeding to which they are a party. This section would be amended to allow any petitioner for a rulemaking that is a participant in a proceeding (as defined by Sec. 2.4) to request suspension of that proceeding.

Subpart L--Sections 2.1200 Through 2.1213

2. Section 2.1202--Authority and role of NRC staff.

This section currently requires the NRC staff to include its position on the matters in controversy when it notifies the presiding officer of its decision on a licensing action, which could be incorrectly interpreted as requiring the staff to advise the presiding

officer on the merits of the contested matters. This amended section would clarify the authority and role of the NRC staff in less formal hearings; staff notices regarding licensing actions would have to include an explanation of why both the public health and safety is protected and the action is in accord with the common defense and security, despite the ``pendency of the contested matter before the presiding officer.''

3. Section 2.1209--Findings of fact and conclusions of law.

This section currently does not specify the formatting requirements for findings of fact and conclusions of law. Amended Sec. 2.1209 would incorporate the Sec. 2.712(c) formatting requirements for findings of fact and conclusions of law to ensure that proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law clearly and precisely communicate the parties' positions on the material issues in the proceeding, with exact citations to the factual record.

4. Section 2.1213--Application for a stay.

Section 2.1213 does not currently exclude matters limited to whether a ``no significant hazards consideration'' determination for a power reactor license amendment was proper from the stay provisions. Section 50.58(b)(6) prohibits challenges to these determinations; section 2.1213 would therefore be amended to exclude from the stay provisions matters limited to whether a no significant hazards consideration determination was proper.

F. Subpart M--Sections 2.1300 Through 2.1331

1. Section 2.1300--Scope of subpart M.

The NRC is proposing to remove Sec. 2.1304 and to amend Sec. 2.1300 to clarify that the generally applicable intervention provisions in subpart C and the specific provisions in subpart M govern in subpart M proceedings.

2. Section 2.1304--Hearing procedures.

The NRC is proposing to remove Sec. 2.1304 and to amend Sec. 2.1300 to clarify that the generally applicable intervention provisions in subpart C and the specific provisions in subpart M govern in subpart M proceedings.

3. Section 2.1316--Authority and role of NRC staff.

This section currently allows the NRC staff to submit a simple notification at any point in the proceeding to become a party. The NRC is proposing to adopt the requirements in Sec. 2.1202(b)(2) and (3), which require the NRC staff, within 15 days of the issuance of an order granting requests for hearing or petitions to intervene and admitting contentions, to notify the presiding officer and the parties whether it desires to participate as a party in the proceeding. The staff's notice would identify the contentions on which it will participate as a party; the staff would be allowed to join the proceeding at a later stage by providing notice to the presiding officer, identifying the contentions on which it wishes to participate as a party, and making the disclosures required by Sec. 2.336(b)(3) through (5).

G. Subpart N--Sections 2.1400 Through 2.1407

1. Section 2.1403--Authority and role of the NRC staff.

This section, which is essentially identical to Sec. 2.1202, would be amended to mirror the changes to that section.

This section would also be updated to correct the reference to Sec. 2.101(f)(8), which should reference Sec. 2.101(e)(8); this

change would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

2. 2.1407--Appeal and Commission review of initial decision.

Proposed Sec. 2.1407(a) would extend the time to file an appeal and an answer to an appeal from 15 to 25 days.

H. Parts 51 and 54

1. Section 51.4--Definitions.

This section would be amended to remove an outdated reference to the former Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board in the definition of NRC Staff. This change would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

2. Section 51.34--Preparation of finding of no significant impact.

This section would be amended to remove outdated references to ``Subpart G of Part 2'' and to the former Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board. These changes would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

3. Section 51.102--Requirement to provide a record of decision; preparation.

This section would be amended to remove outdated references to ``Subpart G of Part 2'' and to the former Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board. These changes would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

4. Section 51.109--Public hearings in proceedings for issuance of materials licensed with respect to a geologic repository.

This section would be amended to remove an outdated reference to the former Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board. This change would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

5. Section 51.125--Responsible official.

This section would be amended to remove outdated references to ``Subpart G of Part 2'' and to the former Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board. These changes would not alter the meaning or intent of this regulation.

6. Section 54.27--Hearings.

This section would be amended to replace an outdated reference to a 30-day period to request a hearing with a reference to the correct 60-day period to request a hearing. This section would retain the provision that in the absence of any hearing requests, a renewed operating license may be issued without a hearing upon 30-day notice published in the Federal Register.

VIII. Plain Language

The Presidential memorandum dated June 1, 1998, entitled ``Plain Language in Government Writing'' directed that the government's documents be written in clear and accessible language. This memorandum was published on June 10, 1998 (63 FR 31883). In complying with this directive, editorial changes have been made to 10 CFR part 2 to improve the organization and readability of the sections being revised. These types of changes are not discussed further in this document. The NRC requests comments on the proposed rule specifically with respect to the clarity and effectiveness of the language used. Comments should be sent to the NRC as explained in the ADDRESSES Section of this document.

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IX. Voluntary Consensus Standards

The National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995, Public Law 104-113, requires that Federal agencies use technical standards that are developed by voluntary, private sector, consensus standards bodies unless using such a standard is inconsistent with applicable law or is otherwise impractical. In this rule, the NRC is approving changes to its procedures for the conduct of hearings in 10 CFR part 2. This action does not constitute the establishment of a government-unique standard as defined in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-119 (1998).

X. Environmental Impact: Categorical Exclusion

The proposed rule involves an amendment to 10 CFR part 2, and thus qualifies as an action for which no environmental review is required under the categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(1). Therefore, neither an environmental impact statement nor an environmental assessment has been prepared for this rulemaking.

XI. Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

This rule does not contain any information collection requirements and, therefore, is not subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.).

Public Protection Notification

The NRC may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a request for information or an information collection requirement unless the requesting document displays a currently valid OMB control number.

XII. Regulatory Analysis

The proposed rule emanates from the desire to make corrections, clarifications, and conforming changes to the NRC's rules of practice and to improve the hearing process. Those amendments that merely reflect either clarifications or corrections to the adjudicatory regulations are not changes to the existing processes. These amendments would not result in a cost to the NRC or to participants in NRC adjudicatory proceedings, and a benefit would accrue to the extent that potential confusion over the meaning of the NRC's regulations is removed.

The more substantial changes suggested in the proposed rule would likewise not impose costs upon either the NRC or participants in NRC adjudications, but would instead bring benefits. Allowing 30 days for the updating of disclosures made under Sec. 2.336(d) would, in fact, reduce burdens on the parties. Fairness and equitable treatment would be furthered by the changes made to the 10 CFR 2.309 filing provisions and to the 10 CFR part 2 discovery provisions. These discovery amendments would improve adjudicatory efficiency, as would the amendments made to the format requirements for findings in final Sec. 2.1209.

The NRC does not believe the option of preserving the status quo is a preferred option. Failing to correct errors and clarify ambiguities will result in continuing confusion over the meaning of the rules, which could lead to the unnecessary waste of resources. Also,

experience has shown that the agency hearing process can be improved through appropriate rule changes. The NRC believes that the proposed rule would improve the fairness, efficiency, and openness of NRC hearings without imposing costs on either the NRC or on participants in NRC adjudicatory proceedings. This constitutes the regulatory analysis for the proposed rule.

XIII. Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification

In accordance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. 605(b), the NRC certifies that this proposed rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. This rule would apply in the context of NRC adjudicatory proceedings concerning nuclear reactors or nuclear materials. Reactor licensees are large organizations that do not fall within the definition of a small business found in Section 3 of the Small Business Act, 15 U.S.C. 632, within the small business standards set forth in 13 CFR part 121, or within the size standards established by the NRC (10 CFR 2.810). Based upon the historically low number of requests for hearings involving materials licensees, it is not expected that this rule would have any significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses.

XIV. Backfit Analysis

The NRC has determined that the backfit rule does not apply to the proposed rule amendments because they do not involve any provisions that would impose backfits as defined in 10 CFR Chapter I. Therefore, a backfit analysis is not required for this proposed rule.

List of Subjects

10 CFR Part 2

Administrative practice and procedure, Antitrust, Byproduct material, Classified information, Environmental protection, Nuclear materials, Nuclear power plants and reactors, Penalties, Sex discrimination, Source material, Special nuclear material, Waste treatment and disposal.

10 CFR Part 51

Administrative practice and procedure, Environmental impact statement, Nuclear materials, Nuclear power plants and reactors, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

10 CFR Part 54

Administrative practice and procedure, Age-related degradation, Backfitting, Classified information, Criminal penalties, Environmental protection, Nuclear power plants and reactors, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set out in the preamble and under the authority of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended; the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, as amended; and 5 U.S.C. 552, the NRC is proposing to adopt the following amendments to 10 CFR parts 2, 51, and 54.

PART 2--AGENCY RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

1. The authority citation for part 2 continues to read as follows:

Authority: Secs. 161, 181, 68 Stat. 948, 953, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2201, 2231); sec. 191, as amended, Pub. L. 87-615, 76 Stat. 409 (42 U.S.C. 2241); sec. 201, 88 Stat. 1242, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5841); 5 U.S.C. 552; sec. 1704, 112 Stat. 2750 (44 U.S.C. 3504 note).

Section 2.101 also issued under secs. 53, 62, 63, 81, 103, 104, 105, 68 Stat. 930, 932, 933, 935, 936, 937, 938, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2073, 2092, 2093, 2111, 2133, 2134, 2135); sec. 114(f); Pub. L. 97-425, 96 Stat. 2213, as amended (42 U.S.C. 10143(f); sec. 102, Pub. L. 91-190, 83 Stat. 853, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4332); sec. 301, 88 Stat. 1248 (42 U.S.C. 5871).

Sections 2.102, 2.103, 2.104, 2.105, 2.321 also issued under secs. 102, 103, 104, 105, 183i, 189, 68 Stat. 936, 937, 938, 954, 955, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2233, 2239). Section 2.105 also issued under Pub. L. 97-415, 96 Stat. 2073 (42 U.S.C. 2239). Sections 2.200-2.206 also issued under secs. 161 b, i, o, 182, 186, 234, 68 Stat. 948-951, 955, 83 Stat. 444, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2201(b), (i), (o), 2236, 2282); sec. 206, 88 Stat. 1246 (42 U.S.C. 5846). Section 2.205(j) also issued under Pub. L. 101-410, 104 Stat. 90, as amended by section 3100(s), Pub. L. 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321-373 (28 U.S.C. 2461 note). Subpart C also issued under sec. 189, 68 Stat. 955 (42

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U.S.C. 2239). Section 2.301 also issued under 5 U.S.C. 554. Sections 2.343, 2.346, 2.712, also issued under 5 U.S.C. 557. Section 2.340 also issued under secs. 135, 141, Pub. L. 97-425, 96 Stat. 2232, 2241 (42 U.S.C. 10155, 10161). Section 2.390 also issued under sec. 103, 68 Stat. 936, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2133) and 5 U.S.C. 552. Sections 2.600-2.606 also issued under sec. 102, Pub. L. 91-190, 83 Stat. 853, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4332). Sections 2.800 and 2.808 also issued under 5 U.S.C. 553. Section 2.809 also issued under 5 U.S.C. 553, and sec. 29, Pub. L. 85-256, 71 Stat. 579, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2039). Subpart K also issued under sec. 189, 68 Stat. 955 (42 U.S.C. 2239); sec. 134, Pub. L. 97-425, 96 Stat. 2230 (42 U.S.C. 10154). Subpart L also issued under sec. 189, 68 Stat. 955 (42 U.S.C. 2239). Subpart M also issued under sec. 184 (42 U.S.C. 2234) and sec. 189, 68 Stat. 955 (42 U.S.C. 2239). Subpart N also issued under sec. 189, 68 Stat. 955 (42 U.S.C. 2239). Appendix A also issued under sec. 6, Pub. L. 91-560, 84 Stat. 1472 (42 U.S.C. 2135).

2. The heading for part 2 is revised to read as set forth above.

3. In part 2, wherever it may appear, revise the phrase ``Presiding Officer'' to read ``presiding officer''.

4. In Sec. 2.4, paragraph (2) of the definition of ``NRC personnel'' and the definition of ``Participant'' are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.4 Definitions.

* * * * *

NRC personnel means:

* * * * *

(2) For the purpose of Sec. Sec. 2.702 and 2.709 only, persons acting in the capacity of consultants to the Commission, regardless of the form of the contractual arrangements under which such persons act as consultants to the Commission; and

* * * * *

Participant means an individual or organization (including a governmental entity) that has petitioned to intervene in a proceeding or requested a hearing but that has not yet been granted party status by an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board or other presiding officer. Participant also means a party to a proceeding and any interested State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe that seeks to participate in a proceeding under Sec. 2.315(c). For the purpose of service of documents, the NRC staff is considered a participant even if not participating as a party.

* * * * *

5. In Sec. 2.101, paragraphs (b), (d), (f)(2)(i)(D), (f)(2)(ii), and (f)(5) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.101 Filing of application.

* * * * *

(b) After the application has been docketed each applicant for a license for receipt of waste radioactive material from other persons for the purpose of commercial disposal by the waste disposal licensee, except applicants under part 61 of this chapter, which must comply with paragraph (f) of this section, shall serve a copy of the application and environmental report, as appropriate, on the chief executive of the municipality in which the activity is to be conducted or, if the activity is not to be conducted within a municipality on the chief executive of the county, and serve a notice of availability of the application or environmental report on the chief executives of the municipalities or counties which have been identified in the application or environmental report as the location of all or part of the alternative sites, containing the docket number of the application; a brief description of the proposed site and facility; the location of the site and facility as primarily proposed and alternatively listed; the name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address (if available) of the applicant's representative who may be contacted for further information; notification that a draft environmental impact statement will be issued by the Commission and will be made available upon request to the Commission; and notification that if a request is received from the appropriate chief executive, the applicant will transmit a copy of the application and environmental report, and any changes to such documents which affect the alternative site location, to the executive who makes the request. In complying with the requirements of this paragraph the applicant should not make public distribution of those parts of the application subject to Sec. 2.390(d). The applicant shall submit to the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards or Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, an affidavit that service of the notice of availability of the application or environmental report has been completed along with a list of names and addresses of those executives upon whom the notice was served.

* * * * *

(d) The Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, Director, Office of New Reactors, Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, or Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, as appropriate, will give notice of the docketing of the public health and safety, common defense and security, and environmental parts of an application for a license for a facility or for receipt of waste radioactive material from other persons for the purpose of commercial disposal by the waste disposal licensee, except that for applications pursuant to part 61 of this chapter, paragraph (f) of this section applies to the Governor or other appropriate official of the State in which the facility is to be located or the activity is to be conducted and will publish in the Federal Register a notice of docketing of the application which states the purpose of the application and specifies the location at which the proposed activity would be conducted.

* * * * *

(f) * * *

(2)(i) * * *

(D) Serve a notice of availability of the application and environmental report on the chief executives or governing bodies of the municipalities or counties which have been identified in the application and environmental report as the location of all or part of the alternative sites if copies are not distributed under paragraph (f)(2)(i)(C) of this section to the executives or bodies.

(ii) All distributed copies shall be completely assembled documents identified by docket number. However, subsequently distributed amendments may include revised pages to previous submittals and, in these cases, the recipients will be responsible for inserting the revised pages. In complying with the requirements of paragraph (f) of this section the applicant may not make public distribution of those parts of the application subject to Sec. 2.390(d).

* * * * *

(5) The Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards or Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, will cause to be published in the Federal Register a notice of docketing which identifies the State and location of the proposed waste disposal facility and will give notice of docketing to the governor of that State and other officials listed in paragraph (f)(3) of this section and will, in a reasonable period thereafter, publish in the Federal Register a notice under Sec. 2.105 offering an opportunity to request a hearing to the applicant and other potentially affected persons.

6. In Sec. 2.105, the introductory text of paragraphs (a), (b), and (d) are revised to read as follows:

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Sec. 2.105 Notice of proposed action.

(a) If a hearing is not required by the Act or this chapter, and if the Commission has not found that a hearing is in the public interest, it will, before acting thereon, publish in the Federal Register, as applicable, or on the NRC Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov>, or both, at the Commission's discretion, either a notice of intended operation under Sec. 52.103(a) of this chapter and a proposed finding that inspections, tests, analysis, and acceptance criteria for a combined

license under subpart C of part 52 have been or will be met, or a notice of proposed action with respect to an application for:

* * * * *

(b) A notice of proposed action published in the Federal Register will set forth:

* * * * *

(d) The notice of proposed action will provide that, within the time period provided under Sec. 2.309(b):

* * * * *

7. In Sec. 2.305, the heading is revised, and paragraphs (c)(4) and (g)(1) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.305 Service of documents, methods, proof.

* * * * *

(c) * * *

(4) To provide proof of service, any document served upon participants to the proceeding as may be required by law, rule, or order of the presiding officer must be accompanied by a signed certificate of service stating the names and addresses of the persons served as well as the method and date of service.

* * * * *

(g) * * *

(1) Service shall be made upon the NRC staff of all documents required to be filed with participants and the presiding officer in all proceedings, including those proceedings where the NRC staff informs the presiding officer of its determination not to participate as a party. Service upon the NRC staff shall be by the same or equivalent method as service upon the Office of the Secretary and the presiding officer, e.g., electronically, personal delivery or courier, express mail, or expedited delivery service. If no attorney representing the NRC Staff has filed a notice of appearance in the proceeding and service is not being made through the E-Filing System, service will be made using the following addresses, as applicable: By delivery to the Associate General Counsel for Hearings, Enforcement & Administration, One White Flint North, 11555-0001 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852; by mail addressed to the Associate General Counsel for Hearings, Enforcement & Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001; by e-mail to OgcMailCenter.Resource@nrc.gov; or by facsimile to 301-415-3725.

* * * * *

8. In Sec. 2.309, paragraph (b)(5), (c), (d)(2), and (d)(3) are revised, paragraphs (h) and (i) are redesignated as paragraphs (i) and (j), respectively, and revised, and a new paragraph (h) is added to read as follows:

Sec. 2.309 Hearing requests, petitions to intervene, requirements for standing, and contentions.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(5) For orders issued under Sec. Sec. 2.202 or 2.205 the time period provided therein.

(c) Subsequent submission of petition/request or new or amended contentions. (1) Determination by presiding officer. Hearing requests,

intervention petitions, and new or amended contentions filed after the deadlines in paragraph (b) of this section, will not be entertained absent a determination by the presiding officer that there is good cause for its submission after the deadlines in paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) Good cause. To show good cause for a request for hearing, petition to intervene, or a new or amended contention filed after the deadlines in paragraph (b) of this section, the requestor or petitioner must demonstrate that:

- (i) The information upon which the filing is based was not previously available;
- (ii) The information upon which the filing is based is materially different from information previously available; and
- (iii) The filing has been submitted in a timely fashion based on the availability of the subsequent information.

(3) New petitioner. A hearing request or intervention petition filed after the deadlines in paragraph (b) of this section must include a specification of contentions if the petitioner seeks admission as a party, and must also demonstrate that the petitioner meets the applicable standing and contention admissibility requirements in paragraphs (d) and (f) of this section.

(4) Party or participant. A new or amended contention filed by a party or participant to the proceeding must also meet the applicable contention admissibility requirements in paragraph (f) of this section. If the party or participant has already addressed the requirements for standing under paragraph (d) of this section in the same proceeding in which the new or amended contentions are filed, it does not need to do so again.

(5) Environmental contentions. For a new or amended contention arising under the National Environmental Policy Act and based on conclusions in an NRC draft or final environmental impact statement, environmental assessment, or any supplements relating thereto, the party or participant also must show that the data or conclusions in the NRC's documents differ significantly from the data or conclusions in the applicant's environmental report.

(d) * * *

(2) Rulings. In ruling on a request for hearing or petition for leave to intervene, the Commission, the presiding officer, or the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board designated to rule on such requests must determine, among other things, whether the petitioner has an interest affected by the proceeding considering the factors enumerated in paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(3) Standing in enforcement proceedings. In enforcement proceedings, the licensee or other person against whom the action is taken shall have standing.

* * * * *

(h) Requirements applicable to States, local governmental bodies, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribes seeking party status. (1) If a State, local governmental body (county, municipality or other subdivision), or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe seeks to participate as a party in a proceeding, it must submit a request for hearing or a petition to intervene containing at least one admissible contention, and must designate a single representative for the hearing. If a request for hearing or petition to intervene is granted, the Commission, the presiding officer or the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board ruling on the request will admit as a party to the proceeding a single designated representative of the State, a single designated

representative for each local governmental body (county, municipality or other subdivision), and a single designated representative for each Federally-recognized Indian Tribe. Where a State's constitution provides that both the Governor and another State official or State governmental body may represent the interests of the State in a proceeding, the Governor and the other State official/government body will be considered separate potential parties.

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(2) If the proceeding pertains to a production or utilization facility (as defined in Sec. 50.2 of this chapter) located within the boundaries of the State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe seeking to participate as a party, no further demonstration of standing is required. If the production or utilization facility is not located within the boundaries of the State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe seeking to participate as a party, the State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe also must demonstrate standing.

(3) In any proceeding on an application for a construction authorization for a high-level radioactive waste repository at a geologic repository operations area under parts 60 or 63 of this chapter, or an application for a license to receive and possess high-level radioactive waste at a geologic repository operations area under parts 60 or 63 of this chapter, the Commission shall permit intervention by the State and local governmental body (county, municipality or other subdivision) in which such an area is located and by any affected Federally-recognized Indian Tribe as defined in parts 60 or 63 of this chapter if the requirements of paragraph (f) of this section are satisfied with respect to at least one contention. All other petitions for intervention in any such proceeding must be reviewed under the provisions of paragraphs (a) through (f) of this section.

(i) Answers to hearing requests, intervention petitions, and requests to admit new or amended contentions after the initial filing. Unless otherwise specified by the Commission, the presiding officer, or the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board designated to rule on the request/petition--

(1) The applicant/licensee, the NRC staff, and other parties to a proceeding may file an answer to a hearing request, intervention petition, or a request to admit amended or new contentions after the initial filing within 25 days after service of the request or petition. Answers should address, at a minimum, the factors set forth in paragraphs (a) through (h) of this section insofar as these sections apply to the filing that is the subject of the answer.

(2) Except in a proceeding under Sec. 52.103 of this chapter, the requestor/petitioner may file a reply to any answer. The reply must be filed within 7 days after service of that answer.

(3) No other written answers or replies will be entertained.

(j) Decision on request/petition. (1) In all proceedings other than a proceeding under Sec. 52.103 of this chapter, the presiding officer shall issue a decision on each request for hearing or petition to intervene within 45 days of the conclusion of the initial pre-hearing conference or, if no pre-hearing conference is conducted, within 45 days after the filing of answers and replies under paragraph (i) of this section. With respect to a request to admit amended or new contentions, the presiding officer shall issue a decision on each such

request within 45 days of the conclusion of any pre-hearing conference that may be conducted regarding the proposed amended or new contentions or, if no pre-hearing conference is conducted, within 45 days after the filing of answers and replies, if any. In the event the presiding officer cannot issue a decision within 45 days, the presiding officer shall issue a notice advising the Commission and the parties, and the notice shall include the expected date of when the decision will issue.

(2) The Commission, acting as the presiding officer, shall expeditiously grant or deny the request for hearing in a proceeding under Sec. 52.103 of this chapter. The Commission's decision may not be the subject of any appeal under Sec. 2.311.

9. In Sec. 2.311, paragraph (b) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.311 Interlocutory review of rulings on requests for hearings/ petitions to intervene, selection of hearing procedures, and requests by potential parties for access to sensitive unclassified non-safeguards information and safeguards information.

* * * * *

(b) These appeals must be made as specified by the provisions of this section, within 25 days after the service of the order. The appeal must be initiated by the filing of a notice of appeal and accompanying supporting brief. Any party who opposes the appeal may file a brief in opposition to the appeal within 25 days after service of the appeal. The supporting brief and any answer must conform to the requirements of Sec. 2.341(c)(2). No other appeals from rulings on requests for hearings are allowed.

* * * * *

10. In Sec. 2.314, paragraph (c)(3) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.314 Appearance and practice before the Commission in adjudicatory proceedings.

* * * * *

(c) * * *

(3) Anyone disciplined under this section may file an appeal with the Commission within 25 days after issuance of the order. The appeal must be in writing and state concisely, with supporting argument, why the appellant believes the order was erroneous, either as a matter of fact or law. The Commission shall consider each appeal on the merits, including appeals in cases in which the suspension period has already run. If necessary for a full and fair consideration of the facts, the Commission may conduct further evidentiary hearings, or may refer the matter to another presiding officer for development of a record. In the latter event, unless the Commission provides specific directions to the presiding officer, that officer shall determine the procedure to be followed and who shall present evidence, subject to applicable provisions of law. The hearing must begin as soon as possible. In the case of an attorney, if no appeal is taken of a suspension, or, if the suspension is upheld at the conclusion of the appeal, the presiding officer, or the Commission, as appropriate, shall notify the State bar(s) to which the attorney is admitted. The notification must include copies of the order of suspension, and, if an appeal was taken, briefs of the parties, and the decision of the Commission.

* * * * *

11. In Sec. 2.315, paragraph (c) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.315 Participation by a person not a party.

* * * * *

(c) The presiding officer will afford an interested State, local governmental body (county, municipality or other subdivision), and Federally-recognized Indian Tribe that has not been admitted as a party under Sec. 2.309, a reasonable opportunity to participate in a hearing. The participation of any State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe shall be limited to unresolved issues and contentions, and issues and contentions that are raised after the State, local governmental body, or Federally-recognized Indian Tribe becomes a participant. Each State, local governmental body, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribe shall, in its request to participate in a hearing, designate a single representative for the hearing. The representative shall be permitted to introduce evidence, interrogate witnesses where cross examination by the parties is permitted, advise the Commission without requiring the representative to take a position with respect to the issue, file proposed findings in those proceedings where findings are permitted, and petition for review by the Commission under Sec. 2.341 with respect to the admitted contentions. The

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representative shall identify those contentions on which they will participate in advance of any hearing held.

* * * * *

12. In Sec. 2.319, paragraph (l) is revised, paragraph (r) is redesignated as paragraph (s), and a new paragraph (r) is added to read as follows:

Sec. 2.319 Power of the presiding officer.

* * * * *

(l) Refer rulings to the Commission under Sec. 2.323(f)(1), or certify questions to the Commission for its determination, either in the presiding officer's discretion, or on petition of a party under Sec. 2.323(f)(2), or on direction of the Commission.

* * * * *

(r) Establish a schedule for briefs and oral arguments to decide any admitted contentions that, as determined by the presiding officer, constitute pure issues of law.

* * * * *

13. In Sec. 2.323, paragraph (f) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.323 Motions.

* * * * *

(f) Referral and certifications to the Commission. (1) If, in the judgment of the presiding officer, the presiding officer's decision raises significant and novel legal or policy issues, or prompt decision by the Commission is necessary to materially advance the orderly disposition of the proceeding, then the presiding officer may promptly

refer the ruling to the Commission. The presiding officer shall notify the parties of the referral either by announcement on-the-record or by written notice if the hearing is not in session.

(2) A party may petition the presiding officer to certify a question to the Commission for early review. The presiding officer shall apply the criteria in Sec. 2.341(f)(1) in determining whether to grant the petition for certification. No motion for reconsideration of the presiding officer's ruling on a petition for certification will be entertained.

* * * * *

14. In Sec. 2.335, paragraphs (b), (c), and (e) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.335 Consideration of Commission rules and regulations in adjudicatory proceedings.

* * * * *

(b) A participant to an adjudicatory proceeding subject to this part may petition that the application of a specified Commission rule or regulation or any provision thereof, of the type described in paragraph (a) of this section, be waived or an exception be made for the particular proceeding. The sole ground for petition of waiver or exception is that special circumstances with respect to the subject matter of the particular proceeding are such that the application of the rule or regulation (or a provision of it) would not serve the purposes for which the rule or regulation was adopted. The petition must be accompanied by an affidavit that identifies the specific aspect or aspects of the subject matter of the proceeding as to which the application of the rule or regulation (or provision of it) would not serve the purposes for which the rule or regulation was adopted. The affidavit must state with particularity the special circumstances alleged to justify the waiver or exception requested. Any other participant may file a response by counter-affidavit or otherwise.

(c) If, on the basis of the petition, affidavit, and any response permitted under paragraph (b) of this section, the presiding officer determines that the petitioning participant has not made a prima facie showing that the application of the specific Commission rule or regulation (or provision thereof) to a particular aspect or aspects of the subject matter of the proceeding would not serve the purposes for which the rule or regulation was adopted and that application of the rule or regulation should be waived or an exception granted, no evidence may be received on that matter and no discovery, cross examination, or argument directed to the matter will be permitted, and the presiding officer may not further consider the matter.

* * * * *

(e) Whether or not the procedure in paragraph (b) of this section is available, a participant to an initial or renewal licensing proceeding may file a petition for rulemaking under Sec. 2.802.

15. In Sec. 2.336, the introductory text to paragraph (b) and paragraph (d) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.336 General discovery.

* * * * *

(b) Except for enforcement proceedings initiated under subpart B of

this part and conducted under subpart G of this part, and proceedings conducted under subpart J of this part, or as otherwise ordered by the Commission, the presiding officer, or the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board assigned to the proceeding, the NRC staff must, within 30 days of the issuance of the order granting a request for hearing or petition to intervene and without further order or request from any party, disclose or provide to the extent available (but excluding those documents for which there is a claim of privilege or protected status):

* * * * *

(d) The duty of disclosure under this section is continuing. A disclosure update must be made every thirty (30) days after initial disclosures. The disclosure update is limited to documents subject to disclosure under this section that have not been disclosed in a prior update and that are developed, obtained, or discovered during the period that runs from the 5 business days before last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update. The duty of mandatory disclosure with respect to new information or documents relevant to a contention ends when presiding officer issues a decision on that contention, or at such other time as may be specified by the presiding officer or the Commission.

* * * * *

16. Section 2.340 is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.340 Initial decision in certain contested proceedings; immediate effectiveness of initial decisions; issuance of authorizations, permits, and licenses.

(a) Initial decision--production or utilization facility operating license. (1) Matters in controversy; presiding officer consideration of matters not put in controversy by parties. In any initial decision in a contested proceeding on an application for an operating license or renewed license (including an amendment to or renewal of an operating license or renewed license) for a production or utilization facility, the presiding officer shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law on the matters put into controversy by the parties and any matter designated by the Commission to be decided by the presiding officer. The presiding officer shall also make findings of fact and conclusions of law on any matter not put into controversy by the parties, but only to the extent that the presiding officer determines that a serious safety, environmental, or common defense and security matter exists, and the Commission approves of an examination of and decision on the matter upon its referral by the presiding officer under, inter alia, the provisions of Sec. Sec. 2.323 and 2.341.

(2) Presiding officer initial decision and issuance of permit or license. (i) In a contested proceeding for the initial issuance or renewal of a construction permit, operating license, or renewed license, or the amendment of an operating or renewed license where the NRC has not made a determination of no significant hazards consideration, the

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Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate, after making the requisite findings, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the permit or license in accordance with the presiding officer's initial

decision once that decision becomes effective.

(ii) In a contested proceeding for the amendment of a construction permit, operating license, or renewed license where the NRC has made a determination of no significant hazards consideration, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate (appropriate official), after making the requisite findings and complying with any applicable provisions of Sec. 2.1202(a) or Sec. 2.1403(a), may issue the amendment before the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective. Once the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective, the appropriate official shall take action with respect to that amendment in accordance with the initial decision. If the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective before the appropriate official issues the amendment, then the appropriate official, after making the requisite findings, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the amendment in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision.

(b) Initial decision--combined license under 10 CFR part 52. (1) Matters in controversy; presiding officer consideration of matters not put in controversy by parties. In any initial decision in a contested proceeding on an application for a combined license under part 52 of this chapter (including an amendment to or renewal of combined license), the presiding officer shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law on the matters put into controversy by the parties and any matter designated by the Commission to be decided by the presiding officer. The presiding officer shall also make findings of fact and conclusions of law on any matter not put into controversy by the parties, but only to the extent that the presiding officer determines that a serious safety, environmental, or common defense and security matter exists, and the Commission approves of an examination of and decision on the matter upon its referral by the presiding officer under, inter alia, the provisions of Sec. Sec. 2.323 and 2.341.

(2) Presiding officer initial decision and issuance of permit or license. (i) In a contested proceeding for the initial issuance or renewal of a combined license under part 52 of this chapter, or the amendment of a combined license where the NRC has not made a determination of no significant hazards consideration, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate, after making the requisite findings, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the permit or license in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision once that decision becomes effective.

(ii) In a contested proceeding for the amendment of a combined license under part 52 of this chapter where the NRC has made a determination of no significant hazards consideration, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate (appropriate official), after making the requisite findings and complying with any applicable provisions of Sec. 2.1202(a) or Sec. 2.1403(a), may issue the amendment before the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective. Once the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective, the appropriate official shall take action with respect to that amendment in accordance with the initial decision. If the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective before the appropriate official issues the amendment, then the appropriate official, after making the requisite findings, shall issue, deny, or

appropriately condition the amendment in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision.

(c) Initial decision on findings under 10 CFR 52.103 with respect to acceptance criteria in nuclear power reactor combined licenses. In any initial decision under Sec. 52.103(g) of this chapter with respect to whether acceptance criteria have been or will be met, the presiding officer shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law on the matters put into controversy by the parties, and any matter designated by the Commission to be decided by the presiding officer. Matters not put into controversy by the parties, but identified by the presiding officer as matters requiring further examination, shall be referred to the Commission for its determination; the Commission may, in its discretion, treat any of these referred matters as a request for action under Sec. 2.206 and process the matter in accordance with Sec. 52.103(f) of this chapter.

(d) Initial decision--manufacturing license under 10 CFR part 52. (1) Matters in controversy; presiding officer consideration of matters not put in controversy by parties. In any initial decision in a contested proceeding on an application for a manufacturing license under subpart C of part 52 of this chapter (including an amendment to or renewal of a manufacturing license), the presiding officer shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law on the matters put into controversy by the parties and any matter designated by the Commission to be decided by the presiding officer. The presiding officer also shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law on any matter not put into controversy by the parties, but only to the extent that the presiding officer determines that a serious safety, environmental, or common defense and security matter exists, and the Commission approves of an examination of and decision on the matter upon its referral by the presiding officer under, inter alia, the provisions of Sec. Sec. 2.323 and 2.341.

(2) Presiding officer initial decision and issuance of permit or license. (i) In a contested proceeding for the initial issuance or renewal of a manufacturing license under subpart C of part 52 of this chapter, or the amendment of a manufacturing license, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate, after making the requisite findings, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the permit or license in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision once that decision becomes effective.

(ii) In a contested proceeding for the initial issuance or renewal of a manufacturing license under subpart C of part 52 of this chapter, or the amendment of a manufacturing license, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate, may issue the license, permit, or license amendment in accordance with Sec. 2.1202(a) or Sec. 2.1403(a) before the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective. If, however, the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective before the license, permit, or license amendment is issued under Sec. 2.1202 or Sec. 2.1403, then the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, or the Director, Office of New Reactors, as appropriate, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the license, permit, or license amendment in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision.

(e) Initial decision--other proceedings not involving production or utilization facilities. (1) Matters in controversy; presiding officer consideration of matters not put in controversy by parties. In a

proceeding not involving production or utilization facilities, the

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presiding officer shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law on the matters put into controversy by the parties to the proceeding, and on any matters designated by the Commission to be decided by the presiding officer. Matters not put into controversy by the parties, but identified by the presiding officer as requiring further examination, must be referred to the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, or the Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate. Depending on the resolution of those matters, the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards or the Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, after making the requisite findings, shall issue, deny, revoke or appropriately condition the license, or take other action as necessary or appropriate.

(2) Presiding officer initial decision and issuance of permit or license. (i) In a contested proceeding under this paragraph, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, or the Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the permit, license, or license amendment in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision once that decision becomes effective.

(ii) In a contested proceeding under this paragraph, the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, or the Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, may issue the permit, license, or amendment in accordance with Sec. 2.1202(a) or Sec. 2.1403(a) before the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective. If, however, the presiding officer's initial decision becomes effective before the permit, license, or amendment is issued under Sec. 2.1202 or Sec. 2.1403, then the Commission, the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, or the Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, shall issue, deny, or appropriately condition the permit, license, or amendment in accordance with the presiding officer's initial decision.

(f) Immediate effectiveness of certain presiding officer decisions. A presiding officer's initial decision directing the issuance or amendment of a limited work authorization under Sec. 50.10 of this chapter, an early site permit under subpart A of part 52 of this chapter, a construction permit or construction authorization under part 50 of this chapter, an operating license under part 50 of this chapter, a combined license under subpart C of part 52 of this chapter, a manufacturing license under subpart F of part 52 of this chapter, or a license under part 72 of this chapter to store spent fuel in an independent spent fuel storage facility (ISFSI) or a monitored retrievable storage installation (MRS), an initial decision directing issuance of a license under part 61 of this chapter, or an initial decision under Sec. 52.103(g) of this chapter that acceptance criteria in a combined license have been met, is immediately effective upon issuance unless the presiding officer finds that good cause has been shown by a party why the initial decision should not become immediately effective.

(g)-(h) [Reserved]

(i) Issuance of authorizations, permits, and licenses--production and utilization facilities. The Commission, the Director, Office of New Reactors, or the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, as appropriate, shall issue a limited work authorization under Sec. 50.10 of this chapter, an early site permit under subpart A of part 52 of this chapter, a construction permit or construction authorization under part 50 of this chapter, an operating license under part 50 of this chapter, a combined license under subpart C of part 52 of this chapter, or a manufacturing license under subpart F of part 52 of this chapter within 10 days from the date of issuance of the initial decision:

(1) If the Commission or the appropriate Director has made all findings necessary for issuance of the authorization, permit or license, not within the scope of the initial decision of the presiding officer; and

(2) Notwithstanding the pendency of a petition for reconsideration under Sec. 2.345, a petition for review under Sec. 2.341, or a motion for stay under Sec. 2.342, or the filing of a petition under Sec. 2.206.

(j) Issuance of finding on acceptance criteria under 10 CFR 52.103. The Commission, the Director, Office of New Reactors, or the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, as appropriate, shall make the finding under Sec. 52.103(g) of this chapter that the acceptance criteria in a combined license have been, or will be met, within 10 days from the date of issuance of the initial decision:

(1) If the Commission or the appropriate Director has made the finding under Sec. 52.103(g) of this chapter that acceptance criteria have been, or will be met, for those acceptance criteria which are not within the scope of the initial decision of the presiding officer; and

(2) Notwithstanding the pendency of a petition for reconsideration under Sec. 2.345, a petition for review under Sec. 2.341, or a motion for stay under Sec. 2.342, or the filing of a petition under Sec. 2.206.

(k) Issuance of other licenses. The Commission or the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, or the Director, Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs, as appropriate, shall issue a license, including a license under part 72 of this chapter to store spent fuel in either an independent spent fuel storage facility (ISFSI) located away from a reactor site or at a monitored retrievable storage installation (MRS), within 10 days from the date of issuance of the initial decision:

(1) If the Commission or the appropriate Director has made all findings necessary for issuance of the license, not within the scope of the initial decision of the presiding officer; and

(2) Notwithstanding the pendency of a petition for reconsideration under Sec. 2.345, a petition for review under Sec. 2.341, or a motion for stay under Sec. 2.342, or the filing of a petition under Sec. 2.206.

17. In Sec. 2.341, paragraphs (a), (b)(1), (b)(3), (c), and (f)(1) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.341 Review of decisions and actions of a presiding officer.

(a)(1) Review of decisions and actions of a presiding officer are treated under this section; provided, however, that no party may request a further Commission review of a Commission determination to

allow a period of interim operation under Sec. 52.103(c) of this chapter. This section does not apply to appeals under Sec. 2.311 or to appeals in the high-level waste proceeding, which are governed by Sec. 2.1015.

(2) Within 120 days after the date of a decision or action by a presiding officer, or within 120 days after a petition for review of the decision or action has been served under paragraph (b) of this section, whichever is greater, the Commission may review the decision or action on its own motion, unless the Commission, in its discretion, extends the time for its review.

(b)(1) Within 25 days after service of a full or partial initial decision by a presiding officer, and within 25 days

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after service of any other decision or action by a presiding officer with respect to which a petition for review is authorized by this part, a party may file a petition for review with the Commission on the grounds specified in paragraph (b)(4) of this section. Unless otherwise authorized by law, a party to an NRC proceeding must file a petition for Commission review before seeking judicial review of an agency action.

* * * * *

(3) Any other party to the proceeding may, within 25 days after service of a petition for review, file an answer supporting or opposing Commission review. This answer may not be longer than 25 pages and should concisely address the matters in paragraph (b)(2) of this section to the extent appropriate. The petitioning party may file a reply brief within 10 days of service of any answer. This reply brief may not be longer than 5 pages.

* * * * *

(c)(1) If within 120 days after the filing of a petition for review the Commission does not grant the petition, in whole or in part, the petition is deemed to be denied, unless the Commission, in its discretion, extends the time for its consideration of the petition and any answers to the petition.

(2) If a petition for review is granted, the Commission may issue an order specifying the issues to be reviewed and designating the parties to the review proceeding. The Commission may, in its discretion, decide the matter on the basis of the petition for review or it may specify whether any briefs may be filed.

(3) Unless the Commission orders otherwise, any briefs on review may not exceed 30 pages in length, exclusive of pages containing the table of contents, table of citations, and any addendum containing appropriate exhibits, statutes, or regulations. A brief in excess of 10 pages must contain a table of contents with page references and a table of cases (alphabetically arranged), cited statutes, regulations, and other authorities, with references to the pages of the brief where they are cited.

* * * * *

(f) * * *

(1) A ruling referred or question certified to the Commission under Sec. Sec. 2.319(l) or 2.323(f) may be reviewed if the certification or referral raises significant and novel legal or policy issues, or resolution of the issues would materially advance the orderly disposition of the proceeding.

* * * * *

18. In Sec. 2.346, paragraphs (e) and (j) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.346 Authority of the Secretary.

* * * * *

(e) Extend the time for the Commission to grant review on its own motion under Sec. 2.341;

* * * * *

(j) Take action on procedural or other minor matters.

19. In Sec. 2.347, paragraphs (e)(1)(i) and (e)(1)(ii) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.347 Ex parte communications.

* * * * *

(e)(1) * * *

(i) When a notice of hearing or other comparable order is issued in accordance with Sec. Sec. 2.104(a), 2.105(e)(2), 2.202(c), 2.205(e), or 2.312; or

(ii) Whenever the interested person or Commission adjudicatory employee responsible for the communication has knowledge that a notice of hearing or other comparable order will be issued in accordance with Sec. Sec. 2.104(a), 2.105(e)(2), 2.202(c), 2.205(e), or 2.312.

* * * * *

20. In Sec. 2.348, paragraphs (d)(1)(i) and (d)(1)(ii) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.348 Separation of functions.

* * * * *

(d)(1) * * *

(i) When a notice of hearing or other comparable order is issued in accordance with Sec. Sec. 2.104(a), 2.105(e)(2), 2.202(c), 2.205(e), or 2.312; or

(ii) Whenever an NRC officer or employee who is or has reasonable cause to believe he or she will be engaged in the performance of an investigative or litigating function or a Commission adjudicatory employee has knowledge that a notice of hearing or other comparable order will be issued in accordance with Sec. Sec. 2.104(a), 2.105(e)(2), 2.202(c), 2.205(e), or 2.312.

* * * * *

21. In Sec. 2.704, paragraph (a)(3) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.704 Discovery-required disclosures.

(a) * * *

(3) Unless otherwise stipulated by the parties or directed by order of the presiding officer, these disclosures must be made within 30 days of the order granting a hearing. A party must make its initial disclosures based on the information then reasonably available to it. A party is not excused from making its disclosures because it has not fully completed its investigation of the case, because it challenges

the sufficiency of another party's disclosures, or because another party has not made its disclosures. The duty of disclosure under this section is continuing. A disclosure update must be made every 30 days after initial disclosures. The disclosure update must contain any information or documents subject to disclosure under this section that have not been disclosed in a prior update and that are developed, obtained, or discovered during the period that runs from the last disclosure update to 5 business days before the filing of the update. The duty of mandatory disclosure with respect to new information or documents relevant to a contention ends when the hearing with respect to that contention has concluded, or at such other time as may be specified by the presiding officer or the Commission.

* * * * *

22. In Sec. 2.705, the introductory text to paragraph (b)(2) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.705 Discovery--additional methods.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(2) Upon his or her own initiative after reasonable notice or in response to a motion filed under paragraph (c) of this section, the presiding officer may set limits on the number of depositions and interrogatories, and may also limit the length of depositions under Sec. 2.706 and the number of requests under Sec. Sec. 2.707 and 2.708. The presiding officer shall limit the frequency or extent of use of the discovery methods otherwise permitted under these rules if he or she determines that:

* * * * *

23. In Sec. 2.709, paragraphs (a)(6) and (a)(7) are added to read as follows:

Sec. 2.709 Discovery against NRC staff.

(a) * * *

(6)(i) In a proceeding arising from an order issued under Sec. Sec. 2.202 or 2.205, the NRC staff must, except to the extent otherwise stipulated or directed by order of the presiding officer or the Commission, provide to the other parties within thirty (30) days of the order granting a hearing and without awaiting a discovery request:

(A) All NRC staff documents relevant to disputed issues alleged with particularity in the pleadings, including any Office of Investigations report and supporting exhibits, and any Office of Enforcement documents regarding the order; and

(B) A list of all documents otherwise responsive to paragraph (a)(6)(i)(A) of this section for which a claim of privilege or protected status is being made, together with sufficient information for assessing the claim of privilege or protected status of the documents.

(ii) The duty of disclosure under this section is continuing. A disclosure

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update must be made every thirty (30) days after initial disclosures.

The disclosure update must contain any information or documents subject to disclosure under this section that have not been disclosed in a prior update and that are developed, obtained, or discovered during the period that runs from the last disclosure update to five (5) business days before the filing of the update. The duty of mandatory disclosure with respect to new information or documents relevant to a contention ends when the hearing with respect to that contention has concluded, or at such other time as may be specified by the presiding officer or the Commission.

(7) When any document, data compilation, or other tangible thing that must be disclosed is publicly available from another source, such as at the NRC Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov>, and/or the NRC Public Document Room, a sufficient disclosure would be the location (including the ADAMS accession number, when available), the title and a page reference to the relevant document, data compilation, or tangible thing.

* * * * *

24. In Sec. 2.710, paragraph (a) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.710 Motions for summary disposition.

(a) Any party to a proceeding may move, with or without supporting affidavits, for a decision by the presiding officer in that party's favor as to all or any part of the matters involved in the proceeding. Summary disposition motions must be filed no later than 20 days after the close of discovery. The moving party shall attach to the motion a short and concise statement of the material facts as to which the moving party contends that there is no genuine issue to be heard. Any other party may serve an answer supporting or opposing the motion, with or without affidavits, within 20 days after service of the motion. The party shall attach to any answer opposing the motion a short and concise statement of the material facts as to which it is contended there exists a genuine issue to be heard. All material facts set forth in the statement required to be served by the moving party will be considered to be admitted unless controverted by the statement required to be served by the opposing party. The opposing party may, within 10 days after service, respond in writing to new facts and arguments presented in any statement filed in support of the motion. No further supporting statements or responses to the motion will be entertained.

* * * * *

25. In Sec. 2.802, paragraph (d) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.802 Petition for rulemaking.

* * * * *

(d) The petitioner may request the Commission to suspend all or any part of any licensing proceeding to which the petitioner is a participant pending disposition of the petition for rulemaking.

* * * * *

Subpart L--Simplified Hearing Procedures for NRC Adjudications

26. The heading of subpart L is revised to read as set forth above:

27. In Sec. 2.1202, the introductory text of paragraph (a) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1202 Authority and role of NRC staff.

(a) During the pendency of any hearing under this subpart, consistent with the NRC staff's findings in its review of the application or matter which is the subject of the hearing and as authorized by law, the NRC staff is expected to promptly issue its approval or denial of the application, or take other appropriate action on the underlying regulatory matter for which a hearing was provided. When the NRC staff takes its action, it must notify the presiding officer and the parties to the proceeding of its action. That notice must include the NRC staff's explanation why the public health and safety is protected and why the action is in accord with the common defense and security despite the pendency of the contested matter before the presiding officer. The NRC staff's action on the matter is effective upon issuance by the staff, except in matters involving:

* * * * *

28. In Sec. 2.1205, paragraph (a) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1205 Summary disposition.

(a) Unless the presiding officer or the Commission directs otherwise, motions for summary disposition may be submitted to the presiding officer by any party no later than 45 days before the commencement of hearing. The motions must be in writing and must include a written explanation of the basis of the motion. The moving party must attach a short and concise statement of material facts for which the moving party contends that there is no genuine issue to be heard, and affidavits to support statements of fact. Motions for summary disposition must be served on the parties and the Secretary at the same time that they are submitted to the presiding officer.

* * * * *

29. Section 2.1209 is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1209 Findings of fact and conclusions of law.

Each party shall file written post-hearing proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law on the contentions addressed in an oral hearing under Sec. 2.1207 or a written hearing under Sec. 2.1208 within 30 days of the close of the hearing or at such other time as the presiding officer directs. Proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law must conform to the format requirements in Sec. 2.712(c).

30. In Sec. 2.1213, paragraph (f) is added to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1213 Application for a stay.

* * * * *

(f) Stays are not available on matters limited to whether a no significant hazards consideration determination was proper in proceedings on power reactor license amendments.

31. Section 2.1300 is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1300 Scope of subpart M.

The provisions of this subpart, together with the generally applicable intervention provisions in subpart C of this part, govern all adjudicatory proceedings on an application for the direct or indirect transfer of control of an NRC license when the transfer requires prior approval of the NRC under the Commission's regulations, governing statutes, or pursuant to a license condition. This subpart provides the only mechanism for requesting hearings on license transfer requests, unless contrary case specific orders are issued by the Commission.

Sec. 2.1304 [Removed]

32. Section 2.1304 is removed.

33. In Sec. 2.1316, paragraph (c) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1316 Authority and role of NRC staff.

* * * * *

(c)(1) Within 15 days of the issuance of the order granting requests for hearing/petitions to intervene and admitting contentions, the NRC staff must notify the presiding officer and the parties whether it desires to participate as a party, and identify the contentions on which it wishes to participate as a party. If the NRC staff desires to be a party thereafter, the NRC staff must notify the presiding officer and the parties, and identify the contentions on which it wishes to participate as a party,

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and make the disclosures required by Sec. 2.336(b)(3) through (b)(5) unless accompanied by an affidavit explaining why the disclosures cannot be provided to the parties with the notice.

(2) Once the NRC staff chooses to participate as a party, it will have all the rights and responsibilities of a party with respect to the admitted contention/matter in controversy on which the staff chooses to participate.

34. In Sec. 2.1403, the introductory text of paragraph (a) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1403 Authority and role of the NRC staff.

(a) During the pendency of any hearing under this subpart, consistent with the NRC staff's findings in its review of the application or matter that is the subject of the hearing and as authorized by law, the NRC staff is expected to promptly issue its approval or denial of the application, or take other appropriate action on the matter that is the subject of the hearing. When the NRC staff takes its action, it must notify the presiding officer and the parties to the proceeding of its action. That notice must include the NRC staff's explanation why the public health and safety is protected and why the action is in accord with the common defense and security despite the pendency of the contested matter before the presiding

officer. The NRC staff's action on the matter is effective upon issuance, except in matters involving:

* * * * *

35. In Sec. 2.1407, paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(3) are revised to read as follows:

Sec. 2.1407 Appeal and Commission review of initial decision.

(a)(1) Within 25 days after service of a written initial decision, a party may file a written appeal seeking the Commission's review on the grounds specified in paragraph (b) of this section. Unless otherwise authorized by law, a party must file an appeal with the Commission before seeking judicial review.

* * * * *

(3) Any other party to the proceeding may, within 25 days after service of the appeal, file an answer supporting or opposing the appeal. The answer may not be longer than 20 pages and should concisely address the matters specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section. The appellant does not have a right to reply. Unless it directs additional filings or oral arguments, the Commission will decide the appeal on the basis of the filings permitted by this paragraph.

* * * * *

PART 51--ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION REGULATIONS FOR DOMESTIC LICENSING AND RELATED REGULATORY FUNCTIONS

36. The authority citation for part 51 continues to read as follows:

Authority: Sec. 161, 68 Stat. 948, as amended, sec. 1701, 106 Stat. 2951, 2952, 2953, (42 U.S.C. 2201, 2297f); secs. 201, as amended, 202, 88 Stat. 1242, as amended, 1244 (42 U.S.C. 5841, 5842); sec. 1704, 112 Stat. 2750 (44 U.S.C. 3504 note). Subpart A also issued under National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, secs. 102, 104, 105, 83 Stat. 853-854, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4332, 4334, 4335); and Pub. L. 95-604, Title II, 92 Stat. 3033-3041; and sec. 193, Pub. L. 101-575, 104 Stat. 2835 (42 U.S.C. 2243). Sections 51.20, 51.30, 51.60, 51.80. and 51.97 also issued under secs. 135, 141, Pub. L. 97-425, 96 Stat. 2232, 2241, and sec. 148, Pub. L. 100-203, 101 Stat. 1330-223 (42 U.S.C. 10155, 10161, 10168). Section 51.22 also issued under sec. 274, 73 Stat. 688, as amended by 92 Stat. 3036-3038 (42 U.S.C. 2021) and under Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, sec. 121, 96 Stat. 2228 (42 U.S.C. 10141). Sections 51.43, 51.67, and 51.109 also under Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, sec. 114(f), 96 Stat. 2216, as amended (42 U.S.C. 10134(f)).

37. In Sec. 51.4, the definition of NRC staff is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 51.4 Definitions.

* * * * *

NRC staff means any NRC officer or employee or his/her authorized representative, except a Commissioner, a member of a Commissioner's immediate staff, an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, a presiding officer, an administrative judge, an administrative law judge, or any

other officer or employee of the Commission who performs adjudicatory functions.

* * * * *

38. In Sec. 51.34, paragraph(b) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 51.34 Preparation of finding of no significant impact.

* * * * *

(b) When a hearing is held on the proposed action under the regulations in subpart G of part 2 of this chapter or when the action can only be taken by the Commissioners acting as a collegial body, the appropriate NRC staff director will prepare a proposed finding of no significant impact, which may be subject to modification as a result of review and decision as appropriate to the nature and scope of the proceeding. In such cases, the presiding officer, or the Commission acting as a collegial body, as appropriate, will issue the final finding of no significant impact.

39. In Sec. 51.102, paragraph (c) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 51.102 Requirement to provide a record of decision; preparation.

* * * * *

(c) When a hearing is held on the proposed action under the regulations in part 2 of this chapter or when the action can only be taken by the Commissioners acting as a collegial body, the initial decision of the presiding officer or the final decision of the Commissioners acting as a collegial body will constitute the record of decision. An initial or final decision constituting the record of decision will be distributed as provided in Sec. 51.93.

40. In Sec. 51.109, paragraph (f) is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 51.109 Public hearings in proceedings for issuance of materials license with respect to a geologic repository.

* * * * *

(f) In making the determinations described in paragraph (e) of this section, the environmental impact statement will be deemed modified to the extent that findings and conclusions differ from those in the final statement prepared by the Secretary of Energy, as it may have been supplemented. The initial decision will be distributed to any persons not otherwise entitled to receive it who responded to the request in the notice of docketing, as described in Sec. 51.26(c). If the Commission reaches conclusions different from those of the presiding officer with respect to such matters, the final environmental impact statement will be deemed modified to that extent and the decision will be similarly distributed.

* * * * *

41. Section 51.125 is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 51.125 Responsible official.

The Executive Director for Operations shall be responsible for overall review of NRC NEPA compliance, except for matters under the

jurisdiction of a presiding officer, administrative judge, administrative law judge, Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, or the Commission acting as a collegial body.

PART 54--REQUIREMENTS FOR RENEWAL OF OPERATING LICENSES FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

42. The authority citation for part 54 continues to read as follows:

Authority: Secs. 102, 103, 104, 161, 181, 182, 183, 186, 189, 68 Stat. 936, 937, 938, 948, 953, 954, 955, as amended, sec. 234, 83 Stat. 1244, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2201, 2232, 2233, 2236, 2239, 2282); secs. 201, 202, 206, 88 Stat. 1242, 1244, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5841, 5842). Section 54.17 also issued under E.O. 12829, 3 CFR, 1993 Comp., p.570; E.O. 12958, as

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amended, 3 CFR, 1995 Comp., p. 333; E.O. 12968, 3 CFR, 1995 Comp., p.391.

43. Section 54.27 is revised to read as follows:

Sec. 52.27 Hearings.

A notice of an opportunity for a hearing will be published in the Federal Register in accordance with 10 CFR 2.105 and 2.309. In the absence of a request for a hearing filed within 60 days by a person whose interest may be affected, the Commission may issue a renewed operating license or renewed combined license without a hearing upon a 30-day notice and publication in the Federal Register of its intent to do so.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 22nd day of February 2011.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
Annette L. Vietti-Cook,
Secretary of the Commission.
[FR Doc. 2011-4345 Filed 2-25-11; 8:45 am]
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