

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20555-0001

March 24, 2021

**NRC REGULATORY ISSUE SUMMARY 2021-01
PREPARATION AND SCHEDULING OF OPERATOR LICENSING EXAMINATIONS**

ADDRESSEES

All holders of, or applicants for, a power reactor operating license or construction permit under Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 50, "Domestic licensing of production and utilization facilities," except those that have certified that they have permanently ceased operations and permanently removed all fuel from the reactor vessel.

All holders of, or applicants for, a power reactor early site permit or a combined license under 10 CFR Part 52, "Licenses, certifications, and approvals for nuclear power plants."

INTENT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing this regulatory issue summary (RIS) to inform addressees that the NRC staff needs updated information on projected site-specific operator licensing examination schedules and on the estimated number of applicants planning to take operator licensing examinations. This information will help the NRC plan its resources more effectively. This RIS supersedes in its entirety RIS 2020-01, "Preparation and Scheduling of Operator Licensing Examinations," dated February 19, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System Accession No. ML19357A038) and requires no action or written response on the part of addressees. Addressee actions to collect and transmit the requested information are strictly voluntary.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Subpart E, "Written Examinations and Operating Tests," of 10 CFR Part 55, "Operators' licenses," contains the relevant NRC regulations for operator licensing examinations. In particular, 10 CFR 55.40, "Implementation," permits nuclear power reactor facility licensees to prepare, proctor, and grade the written examinations required by 10 CFR 55.41, "Written examination: Operators," and 10 CFR 55.43, "Written examination: Senior operators," subject to certain conditions. Under 10 CFR 55.40, facility licensees may also prepare the NRC-administered operating tests required by 10 CFR 55.45, "Operating tests," subject to certain conditions. Under 10 CFR 55.40(c), facility licensees that choose not to prepare, proctor, and grade their own written examinations and prepare their own operating tests must request, in writing, that the NRC prepare, proctor, and grade the written examinations and operating tests.

In RIS 2020-01, the NRC asked power reactor licensees to voluntarily submit proposed schedules of examinations they intended to prepare and to estimate the number of applicants planning to take onsite examinations in calendar years (CYs) 2022–2025. This RIS requests that licensees voluntarily update initial examination schedules for CYs 2023–2026.

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SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

The NRC uses nearly twice as many resources to prepare an examination as it does to review, approve, administer, and document a licensee-prepared examination. The number of examinations licensees administer fluctuates annually. Consequently, the NRC has found it helpful to request an annual update of the operator licensing examination needs of power reactor facility licensees. Therefore, the NRC requests that licensees voluntarily provide proposed examination schedules and an estimated number of applicants. The update should indicate whether the licensee or the NRC will prepare the examination. This information will help the NRC budget its resources. In an effort to conduct initial operator licensing examinations more efficiently, the NRC regional offices will coordinate with facility licensees to build a more level examination schedule that does not result in peak examination periods throughout a CY. Therefore, licensees should be flexible and expect dialogue when selecting their examination dates. Licensees should also be aware that NRC staff from a different region may conduct their examination based on regional resource considerations.

The NRC requests that each licensee provide the information described below using NRC Form 536, "Operator Licensing Examination Data" (Enclosure 1). NRC Form 536 is also available on the NRC Web site at <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1308/ML13083A179.pdf>.

A. Proposed Examination Preparation Schedule

Licensees should determine the number of examinations they intend to prepare and the number of examinations they will request the NRC to prepare during CYs 2023–2026. For examinations that facility licensees will prepare, the NRC will assume that each examination includes the written examination and the operating test unless the licensee specifies otherwise. Joint NRC and licensee examination development is permitted and should be coordinated with the applicable NRC regional office. Licensees should notify the applicable NRC regional office by letter of any required schedule changes that arise after submission of the RIS response for agreement to, and coordination of, changes to examination administration.

B. Initial Operator Licensing Examinations

For each desired examination, licensees should determine the expected number of applicants to be tested and enter the proposed primary and alternate dates of the examination. Licensees should choose the primary and alternate dates to provide the NRC the necessary flexibility to ensure that examinations can be completed efficiently. Primary and alternate dates should be at least 1 month apart. If requesting more than one examination per CY, licensees should fill in the applicable columns, as appropriate, through CY 2026. As shown in Enclosure 2, "Regional Schedule Availability Information, 2023–2026," the NRC has assigned resources nationally through CY 2025 based on previous responses to RIS 2020-01. For additional examination requests, licensees should preferentially request examination dates shown as available in Enclosure 2.

VOLUNTARY RESPONSE

The NRC asks addressees that choose to submit the information requested in NRC Form 536 to do so within 30 days of receiving this RIS. Addressees should direct responses to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, ATTN: Document Control Desk, Washington, DC 20555-0001, and send a copy of the response to the applicable NRC regional office,

ATTN: Operations Branch. Responses to the region may be submitted electronically to the appropriate technical contact listed at the end of this document.

BACKFITTING AND ISSUE FINALITY

This RIS requests the addressees to inform the NRC of the dates and number of initial operator licensing examinations for CYs 2023–2026, as well as whether the licensee or the NRC will prepare the examinations. This RIS requests the addressees to voluntarily provide information to assist the NRC in the administrative tasks of scheduling and conducting operator licensing examinations. This constitutes information collection and reporting and is not within the purview of the Backfit Rule, in accordance with 10 CFR 50.109, “Backfitting,” or any of the issue finality provisions in 10 CFR Part 52. In addition, this RIS does not require any action or written response from the addressees. Any action on the part of addressees to collect and transmit operator licensing examination data in accordance with the request contained in this RIS is strictly voluntary. Therefore, this RIS does not represent backfitting as defined in 10 CFR 50.109(a)(1) and is not otherwise inconsistent with any issue finality provision in 10 CFR Part 52. For these reasons, the NRC staff did not perform a backfit analysis for this RIS or further address any issue finality criteria in 10 CFR Part 52.

FEDERAL REGISTER NOTIFICATION

The NRC did not publish in the *Federal Register* a notice of opportunity for public comment on this RIS because it concerns an administrative aspect of the regulatory process that involves the voluntary submission of information on the part of addressees.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT

This RIS is not a rule as defined in the Congressional Review Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 801–808).

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT

This RIS contains voluntary information collections that are subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq). The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved these information collections under approval number 3150-0131. The burden to the public for these information collections is estimated to average 45 minutes per response. Send comments about this information collection to the FOIA, Library, and Information Collections Branch, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, or by e-mail to Infocollects.Resource@nrc.gov, and to the Desk Officer, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, NEOB-10202 (3150-0131), Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503.

Public Protection Notification

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

CONTACT

Please direct any questions about this matter to the technical contacts listed below.

/RA/ G. Suber for

Christopher G. Miller, Director
Division of Reactor Oversight
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Note: NRC generic communications may be found on the NRC public Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov>, under NRC Library/Document Collections.

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Enclosures:

1. NRC Form 536
2. Regional Schedule Availability Information, 2023–2026

NRC REGULATORY ISSUE SUMMARY 2021-01, "PREPARATION AND SCHEDULING OF OPERATOR LICENSING EXAMINATIONS," DATE: March 24, 2021

ADAMS Accession No.: ML21028A681

***via e-mail**

EPID No. L-2021-GEN-0000

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DATE	2/22/2021	3/10/21	3/11/2021	3/11/2021	3/24/2021	

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NRC FORM 536 (01-2021)	U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  OPERATOR LICENSING EXAMINATION DATA	APPROVED BY OMB: NO. 3150-0131 <small>Estimated burden per response to comply with this voluntary information collection request: 45 minutes. This information collection is used to plan budgets and resources for operator examinations. Send comments regarding burden estimate to the FOIA, Library, and Information Collections Branch (T-6 A10M), U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, or by e-mail to infocollections.Resource@nrc.gov, and the OMB reviewer at: OMB Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, (3150-0131), Attn: Desk Officer for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 725 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20503, e-mail: nra_submission@omb.eop.gov. The NRC may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the document requesting or requiring the collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.</small>	EXPIRES: 01/31/2024
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FACILITY	NRC REGION

A. PROPOSED EXAMINATION PREPARATION SCHEDULE

PROPOSED NUMBER	CY _____	CY _____	CY _____	CY _____
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF LICENSEE-PREPARED EXAMINATIONS				
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF NRC-PREPARED EXAMINATIONS				

B. INITIAL OPERATOR LICENSE EXAMINATIONS

PROPOSED NUMBER	CY _____	CY _____	CY _____	CY _____
NUMBER OF REACTOR OPERATORS				
NUMBER OF SENIOR REACTOR OPERATORS - INSTANT				
NUMBER OF SENIOR REACTOR OPERATORS - UPGRADE				
NUMBER OF SENIOR REACTOR OPERATORS - LIMITED				
PROPOSED DATES				
PRIMARY DATE				
ALTERNATE DATE				

REGIONAL SCHEDULE AVAILABILITY INFORMATION, 2023–2026

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is assigning resources nationally from calendar year 2023 through calendar year 2026 to provide a level and efficient schedule. Months available for previously unscheduled examinations are shown in white. If a licensee has previously requested and confirmed an examination date, the month is shown in gray.

2023	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				

2024	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				

2025	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				

2026	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				