



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES FINAL REVIEW PLAN FOR MIXED OXIDE FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has published a final plan for the review of an expected application for a mixed oxide (MOX) fuel fabrication facility.

The Department of Energy has announced plans to construct a MOX fuel fabrication facility at its Savannah River site in South Carolina through a contract with Duke Cogema Stone & Webster (known as DCS). DCS would construct and operate a MOX facility that would convert surplus weapons-grade plutonium provided by the DOE into fuel to power commercial nuclear reactors. Commercial nuclear power plants in the United States currently use uranium as fuel; the mixed oxide fuel would be a combination of uranium and plutonium.

This initiative is one strategy that the Department of Energy is undertaking to dispose of surplus plutonium. By converting this material into spent fuel, the plutonium becomes more difficult to recover and use in nuclear weapons.

The facility would be the first MOX fuel fabrication plant licensed by NRC that converts weapons grade plutonium into fuel for commercial nuclear reactors.

Under NRC's regulations, potential operators of plutonium facilities, such as a MOX fuel fabrication plant, must obtain authorization from the agency to begin construction and must obtain a license before operating the facility.

The Standard Review Plan provides guidance to the NRC staff performing safety, safeguards, and environmental reviews of the anticipated applications for both construction and operation. The plan ensures the quality, uniformity, and predictability of the reviews. NRC will be reviewing the following information about the proposed MOX facility:

- General information about the applicant and the plant site;
- Applicant's financial qualifications to construct and operate the facility;
- Provisions for protection from radiation exposure, chemical exposure, fires, and other emergencies;
- Plans to protect against theft, loss or diversion of special nuclear material; and
- Management and administrative procedures.

Each section of the plan addresses the responsibilities of NRC technical reviewers, regulations pertinent to specific technical areas, acceptance criteria used by the staff, and the methods used to accomplish the review.

The NRC published a draft plan in February, and received over 300 comments. A public meeting was held in May, and all comments were considered in formulating the final version of the plan.

A copy of the “Standard Review Plan for the Review of an Application for a Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility,” (NUREG-1718), is available by writing to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Distribution Services, Washington DC 20555-0001. The review plan is also available on the agency’s website, at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NUREGS/SR1718/index.html>

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