



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES FINAL POLICY STATEMENT ON DECOMMISSIONING CRITERIA FOR WEST VALLEY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is issuing a final policy statement establishing the criteria of its existing license termination rule (LTR) as the decommissioning criteria for the West Valley Demonstration Project at the West Valley site in New York. This reflects the fact that the applicable decommissioning goal for the entire NRC-licensed site is compliance with the requirements of the LTR.

The Demonstration Project will be decommissioned by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in cooperation with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc., formerly operated a spent nuclear fuel reprocessing facility at the site from 1966 to 1972. It was the only commercial reprocessing plant that has operated in the United States. Reprocessing involves extracting usable uranium or plutonium from irradiated fuel.

The West Valley Demonstration Project Act authorizes DOE, in cooperation with NYSERDA, the owner of the site and the holder of a NRC license, to carry out a high-level-waste-management demonstration project at the site that includes decommissioning. NRC responsibilities under the Act include prescribing decommissioning criteria for the Demonstration Project.

Application of NRC's existing license termination rule as the applicable decommissioning goal for the Demonstration Project will ensure that public health and safety and the environment will be protected. However, the Commission also recognizes that health and safety and cost-benefit considerations may justify the evaluation of alternatives that do not fully comply with the license termination criteria. The Commission is prepared to provide flexibility to ensure cleanup to the maximum extent technically and economically possible, provided protection of public health and the environment can be maintained.

The draft policy statement on decommissioning criteria for West Valley was published in the Federal Register on December 3, 1999. A public meeting, to solicit public comments on the draft, was held on January 5, 2000. The Commission approved an extension of the public comment period until April 1, 2000.

During the comment period, the NRC received 28 letters, raising about 200 individual comments, and identified an additional 70 individual comments from the transcript of the January 5

public meeting. The final policy statement, to be published shortly in the *Federal Register*, reflects consideration of these comments.

Copies of the policy statement will also be available at the NRC's Public Electronic Reading Room link at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/public-release.html> and at the NRC Public Document Room in Rockville, Maryland.

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