



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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ASLB TO HOLD EVIDENTIARY HEARING ON PROPOSED N.M. ENRICHMENT FACILITY, OCT. 24-27 IN ROCKVILLE, MD.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will conduct an evidentiary hearing Oct. 24-27 at agency headquarters in Rockville, Md., concerning the application of Louisiana Energy Services (LES) to construct and operate a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facility in Lea County, N.M.

The majority of the hearing will be closed to the public, because the testimony will include information that is proprietary to LES' proposed facility. The first session on Monday, Oct. 24, will begin with a public session for opening statements by LES, the NRC staff, and the intervenors - the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) and Public Citizen. There will be a second public session at the end of the hearing.

The Board will hear evidence regarding the technical contentions filed by NIRS and Public Citizen challenging the LES application. These contentions pertain primarily to costs associated with facility decommissioning and the disposal of depleted uranium tails created by the enrichment process.

The hearing will be held in the ASLB hearing room at NRC headquarters, Two White Flint North, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Md. The public session on Oct. 24 will begin at 9:30 a.m. and is expected to last for 1-2 hours. Updates on any subsequent public sessions will be available by calling 1-800-368-5642, ext. 5036. The hearing is being held in Maryland due to the necessity for closed sessions to discuss proprietary information.

As part of the licensing process, NRC regulations require the Board to conduct an additional evidentiary hearing to assess environmental and technical matters that were not raised by intervening party challenges to the LES application. The Board currently expects to conduct this public hearing in Lea County in March 2006, including one or more "limited appearance" sessions during which members of the public will be able to present the Board with their views on the LES license application.

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