



NRC NEWS

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NRC SCHEDULES MEETINGS IN SOUTH CAROLINA ON PLAN FOR REVIEWING MIXED OXIDE FUEL FACILITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled two public meetings in Columbia and North Augusta, South Carolina, July 12 and 13, to discuss its plan for reviewing a possible future application for a mixed oxide (MOX) fuel fabrication facility.

The meetings will be held at the University of South Carolina's Capstone Conference Center, at 900 Barnwell Street, in Columbia on July 12, and at the North Augusta Community Center, at 495 Brookside Drive, in North Augusta on July 13, both days from 7:00 - 10:00 p.m.

The Department of Energy announced plans to construct a MOX fuel plant at its Savannah River site in South Carolina through a contract with the consortium of Duke Engineering & Services, COGEMA Inc., and Stone & Webster (known as DCS). DCS would build and operate a MOX facility that would convert surplus weapons-grade plutonium, supplied by the Department of Energy, into fuel for use in commercial nuclear reactors. Such use would render the plutonium essentially inaccessible and unattractive for weapons use. 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.

The commercial reactors chosen to use the MOX fuel are Duke Power's Catawba plant, located near Rock Hill, South Carolina, and the McGuire plant, located near Charlotte, North Carolina.

Under NRC regulations, DCS must submit an application and receive NRC approval prior to initiating construction and operation of a mixed oxide processing facility. The facility must be built in accordance with strict safety standards set forth in the agency's regulations, and then committed to in an approved license application. DCS has not yet submitted an application for such a facility.

At the meetings, the NRC will discuss its role with respect to the proposed facility, describe the agency's licensing process, describe opportunities for public participation and answer questions from interested members of the public.

In addition, the NRC will describe the general characteristics of a MOX fuel fabrication facility, and discuss the activities to occur over the next few years if an application is submitted.

The draft Standard Review Plan, which the staff will use to guide its review of the proposed MOX fuel fabrication facility, was published for comment in January, and twelve people responded in writing. A public meeting was held in May at NRC headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, to discuss the draft plan.

A copy of the “Standard Review Plan for the Review of an Application for a Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (Draft Report for Comment)” (NUREG-1718) is available by writing to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Distribution Services, Washington, DC 20555-0001. A copy is also available at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NUREGS/SR1718/index.html> on the NRC’s website and through the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS).

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