



NRC NEWS

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NRC CHANGES REGULATIONS ON ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS FOR POSSIBLE HIGH-LEVEL WASTE REPOSITORY HEARING

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is changing its regulations to provide additional details on how documents should be placed on Internet web sites for a possible hearing associated with the license application review for a future high-level radioactive waste repository. The changes also revise the time when participants must place all the required documents on their web sites, and certify that placement.

The agency's current regulations require all potential participants in the license application review process to make their documents available in electronic form through participants' individual web sites on a Licensing Support Network (LSN). The documents that will have to be made available on this network will consist of the information that a party, potential party or interested government participant intends to rely on in the licensing proceeding for a high-level waste repository, and certain other relevant information. The web sites will be accessible by members of the public.

A proposed rule on this subject was published in the Federal Register for comment on August 22. It would have required participants to certify that the required documentary material has been identified and made electronically available at the initial times specified in the rule. The current regulations, and the proposed rule, require the Department of Energy (DOE) and the NRC to make their documents initially available in electronic form beginning 30 days after DOE submits its site recommendation decision to the President. All other participants would have to make their documents available in electronic form no later than 30 days after the date that the repository site selection decision becomes final after review by Congress. Participants are required to update the certifications at 12-month intervals.

In response to comments received, the final rule changes the required time for submittal of documents by tying the date to the DOE license application rather than to the DOE site recommendation to the President.

The revisions require DOE to make its documents available in electronic form no later than six months before it submits a license application to the NRC. The NRC must make its documents available 30 days after the DOE certification of document availability. All other participants must make their documents available 90 days after DOE certification of document availability.

The revisions also establish the basic computerized structure and design standards for the websites. The individual websites will be accessible through an overarching "LSN site." Each participant web site will deliver to Internet users the documents responsive to a query made through the LSN website. The LSN homepage/web site will also be used to post announcements about the overall LSN program or items of interest (such as hours of availability and scheduled outages) for the participant sites.

The LSN Administrator, an NRC official with responsibility for coordinating the functioning of the electronic network and reporting periodically on its status to the Commission, will have authority to review participant website designs to verify compliance with the basic design standards, including the authority to allow variances from the standards.

A more complete discussion of the final rule, and changes made in response to public comments and additional NRC review, is contained in a Federal Register notice to be issued shortly.

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