



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO MEET WITH PUBLIC TO DISCUSS DECOMMISSIONING SEQUOYAH FUELS

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission will meet with the public Tuesday, May 13 to discuss issues related to the decommissioning activities at the Sequoyah Fuels Corporation facility near Gore, Oklahoma.

The meeting will be held from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the Gore High School cafeteria, 1200 Highway 10N, to discuss a change in the classification of some of the wastes at the Sequoyah Fuels Corp. site. NRC staff will discuss the basis for the reclassification and its effect on decommissioning and reclamation of the site, and will answer questions from the public. Additionally, the status of the environmental review of reclamation activities at the site will be discussed. The NRC staff is seeking public comments on the environmental impacts that need to be addressed in light of the reclassification.

In addition to the Tuesday evening meeting, NRC staff and Sequoyah Fuels Corp. officials will tour the site and hold a technical exchange from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon Wednesday, May 14. This meeting and site tour will be held at the Sequoyah Fuels facility located at Interstate-40 and Highway 10N. The technical exchange will provide Sequoyah Fuels an opportunity to discuss technical issues identified in NRC's March 24 letter accepting the reclamation plan for detailed review by NRC staff. It will also afford the NRC staff and its consultants an opportunity to discuss environmental issues prior to anticipated NRC requests for additional information from Sequoyah Fuels.

Other agencies and organizations cooperating in the environmental review are the Environmental Protection Agency; the Army Corps of Engineers; the U.S. Geological Survey; the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality; and the Cherokee Nation.

From 1970 to 1993, the Sequoyah Fuels facility was used to convert uranium oxide (yellowcake) to uranium hexafluoride, a step in the production of nuclear reactor fuel. From 1987 to 1993, the facility was also used to convert depleted uranium hexafluoride to depleted

uranium tetrafluoride. During this operational period, Sequoyah Fuels disposed of radioactive material on site in accordance with NRC regulations in effect at the time. It also built ponds for chemically and radioactively contaminated materials, and disposed of sludge and other process materials by burial on site.

In 1998, Sequoyah Fuels began to prepare for decommissioning the site. It submitted to NRC a site characterization report, a study of remediation alternatives, and a decommissioning plan. The remediation plan proposed by Sequoyah Fuels was an on-site disposal cell.

In January 2001, Sequoyah Fuels requested that the NRC determine if waste material from the solvent extraction process at the facility could be classified as byproduct material as defined in section 11e.(2) of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954. In July 2002, the Commission concluded that those wastes, which comprise most of the waste at the site, could be reclassified as 11e.(2) byproduct material.

The NRC is conducting a review of the site reclamation plan to determine if it meets regulatory requirements. At the conclusion of its review, NRC staff will issue a Technical Evaluation Report documenting its findings. NRC staff will also develop an environmental impact statement to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with reclamation alternatives. The environmental impact statement will evaluate the potential impacts of the licensee's proposal and alternatives, including the option of disposing of the contaminated material off-site in a licensed disposal facility.

The May 13 public meeting is one of a series of public meetings held periodically to discuss various issues related to the remediation of the Sequoyah Fuels site.

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