



NRC NEWS

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NRC HAS DETERMINED CONTAMINATED ASH AT PENNSYLVANIA SITE MEETS NRC CRITERIA FOR UNRESTRICTED USE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has determined there is no need for further NRC action on uranium-contaminated ash at the Kiski Valley Water Pollution Control Authority (KVVWPCA) site in Leechburg, Pa.

The KVVWPCA is not under an NRC license; however, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) notified the NRC that elevated uranium concentrations had been found in an ash sample from the KVVWPCA site, where the Authority operates a waste-water treatment facility.

“The NRC conducted dose assessments for potential realistic scenarios and concluded the ash meets NRC safety criteria for unrestricted release,” said Daniel M. Gillen, Deputy Director for the Decommissioning Directorate, NRC Division of Waste Management and Environmental Protection. “Because environmental impacts from NRC’s decision to take no further action are expected to be insignificant, no formal environmental impact statement is necessary,” he added. Although NRC has determined that no further NRC action is necessary, this does not preclude PADEP from taking action at the site under Pennsylvania’s Solid Waste Management Act.

The uranium contamination at the Kiski Valley site may have resulted from the reconcentration of uranium-contaminated effluents released from the sanitary sewers and laundry drains of the Babcock & Wilcox (B&W) Apollo facility. During its operation, the B&W Apollo facility, located in Armstrong County, about 25 miles east-northeast of Pittsburgh, manufactured and fabricated nuclear fuel. Active operations at the site ceased in 1983. After successful completion of decommissioning activities, the NRC terminated the B&W Apollo license on April 14, 1997, and released the site for unrestricted use. Discharges from the B&W Apollo facility did not exceed permissible levels in effect during operation.

From 1976 to 1993, the KVVWPCA treated sewage sludge at its waste-water treatment plant by incineration. It disposed of the resulting sewage sludge ash by mixing it with water to form a liquid slurry and pumping this material into an onsite lagoon. Discharges to the lagoon ceased in 1993, and plans for removal of the ash and closure of the lagoon were developed in 1994. In the course of the site closure, PADEP notified NRC that elevated uranium concentrations had been found in an ash sample.

The contaminated ash was contained in the lagoon and has been analyzed and characterized in great detail. NRC staff used the characterization data along with laboratory analyses to conduct dose assessments for a range of potential scenarios and determined that, for all of the scenarios, the KVVWPCA site meets the NRC criteria for unrestricted release.

NRC and PADEP have had numerous interactions on the decommissioning of the KVVWPCA site. On Sept. 17 the NRC issued a draft environmental assessment on the site for public comment. It found that, whether the material in the KVVWPCA ash lagoon is left in place or excavated, associated radiation doses meet the NRC's criteria for unrestricted use. No comments were received on this draft.

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