



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

www.nrc.gov

No. I-07-041

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July 23, 2007

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NRC SEEKS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SHIELDALLOY DECOMMISSIONING PROPOSAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has requested additional information from Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corp. (SMC) on a decommissioning proposal for SMC's facility in Newfield (Gloucester County), N.J. The proposal was submitted last year and the NRC notified the company on Oct. 18, 2006 that it had sufficient information to begin its review.

In a letter sent earlier this month, the NRC identified 72 questions requiring additional information from SMC in order for the agency to complete its review. SMC has 120 days to answer the request. Should the information not be provided within the specified timeframe, the NRC may suspend or terminate its review of the plan. The results of the agency's safety review will be documented in a Safety Evaluation Report.

Among the areas in which more information is being sought are the current radiological condition of the site; geological and hydrological factors that would enter into the NRC's consideration of the proposal; and SMC's plan to construct an engineered barrier over waste material at the site, including the technical justification for its design. In addition, the NRC staff is asking for information pertaining to such matters as cost/benefit considerations of the SMC proposal, the effect of the proposal on the local economy and the institutional control of the site for the next 1,000 years.

Environmental issues related to the decommissioning proposal are also being evaluated by the NRC staff. That review will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NRC staff anticipates holding a public meeting in Newfield in 2008 to solicit public comments on a draft EIS.

Located at 35 South West Blvd., the Newfield facility was used for smelting and alloy production from 1940 through 2001. One of the raw materials used by the company was a niobium ore called pyrochlore, which contains uranium and thorium and is subject to NRC licensing requirements. The majority of the radioactive material remaining at the site consists of slag generated during production operations and dust from baghouses.

Under its decommissioning plan, Shieldalloy has proposed consolidating all of the materials

containing uranium and thorium into a single pile on a portion of the site's storage yard, and then shaping, grading and covering it with an engineered barrier. The focus of the NRC review is to determine if the proposed decommissioning plan meets the agency's requirements for protecting public health and safety and the environment. That would include ensuring that no member of the public would receive exposure to radiation from the material in excess of allowable regulatory limits.

The remainder of the site could be released for unrestricted use, provided that the company could demonstrate there was no residual contamination above allowable levels.

Shieldalloy's decommissioning proposal is available on the NRC web site through its ADAMS document system, at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>, using docket number 04007102.

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