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**NRC SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT TO REVISE SAFETY INSPECTION PROGRAM
FOR FUEL CYCLE FACILITIES; SCHEDULES MEETING**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled a public meeting on September 16 in Rockville, Maryland, to obtain suggestions on revising the agency's safety inspection program for fuel cycle and uranium enrichment facilities.

The agency currently licenses, certifies and inspects commercial nuclear fuel facilities involved in the processing and fabrication of uranium ore into reactor fuel. These facilities possess large quantities of materials that are potentially hazardous (radioactive, toxic or flammable) to workers, the public and the environment. The NRC regulates these facilities to ensure the adequacy of measures taken to protect against these hazards.

The move to revise the safety inspection and oversight program for these facilities reflects the agency's desire to apply more objective and safety-significant criteria in assessing the performance of all its licensees, as well as the need to effectively regulate the industry with a smaller staff and budget. This initiative will employ lessons learned from the revised commercial nuclear reactor inspection and oversight program which began earlier this year.

The nuclear fuel cycle begins with the mining and milling of uranium to produce uranium concentrate (called "yellowcake"). The yellowcake is converted into uranium hexafluoride gas at a conversion facility, and loaded into cylinders. The cylinders are sent to a gaseous diffusion plant, where uranium is enriched for use as reactor fuel. The enriched uranium is then converted into oxide powder, fabricated into fuel pellets, loaded into fuel rods, and bundled into assemblies at a fuel fabrication facility. Bundled assemblies are then transported to commercial nuclear power plants for use as fuel.

The NRC currently inspects these facilities several times a year in a variety of technical areas, such as chemical process safety, fire, nuclear criticality, and radiation safety. The goal of the new initiative is to focus inspections on activities where the potential safety risks may be greater; obtain more objective indicators of safety performance; increase public confidence; and optimize regulatory effectiveness and efficiency.

The names and locations of the affected fuel cycle facilities are:

Uranium Fuel Fabrication Facilities:

ABB Combustion Engineering (Hematite, Missouri)
General Electric (Wilmington, North Carolina)
Westinghouse Electric (Columbia, South Carolina)
Nuclear Fuel Services (Erwin, Tennessee)
Framatome Cogema Fuels (Lynchburg, Virginia)
BWX Technologies Naval Nuclear Fuel Division (Lynchburg, Virginia)
Siemens Power Corporation (Richland, Washington)

Uranium Hexafluoride Production Facility:

Allied-Signal Incorporated (Metropolis, Illinois)

Gaseous Diffusion Enrichment Facilities:

U.S. Enrichment Corporation (Paducah, Kentucky)

U.S. Enrichment Corporation (Piketon, Ohio)

This meeting is the first of several which will be held over the next two years to factor public comments into the revised fuel facility safety inspection program.

The meeting will be held in the Commissioners' Hearing Room in the lobby of the agency's One White Flint North Building, at 11555 Rockville Pike, from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Those who seek background information on this initiative may obtain SECY 99-188, "Evaluation and Proposed Revision of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Facility Safety Inspection Program" from the agency's website, at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/COMMISSION/SECYS/index.html>, or from the Public Document Room, telephone 202-634-3273.

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