

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC ISSUES LICENSE AMENDMENT TO KERR-MCGEE
TO AUTHORIZE REMEDIATION OF CUSHING, OKLAHOMA, SITE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is issuing a license amendment to the Kerr-McGee Corporation to authorize remediation of its refinery site located in Cushing, Oklahoma.

The refinery processed uranium fuel and thorium metal under licenses issued by the former Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in the early 1960s. The uranium fuel and thorium processing area was subsequently decommissioned, and the property and facilities were released by the AEC for unrestricted use. Kerr McGee continued to operate a petroleum refinery at the site until 1972, when it ceased operations.

In the late 1980s, Kerr-McGee, finding that radioactive contamination still existed at the site, concluded that it was not adequately decontaminated. An NRC license issued to Kerr-McGee in April 1993 allowed the company to possess radioactively contaminated soil, sludge, sediment, trash, building rubble, and other contaminated materials to accomplish the cleanup. The NRC has determined that remediation of the Cushing site will result in no significant impact on public health and safety or the environment. Although public opportunity for a hearing was offered in 1995, none was requested.

Kerr McGee plans to collect the radioactive material and ship it to the Envirocare low-level radioactive waste disposal facility located in Clive, Utah. When the remediation is complete and a site survey ensures that NRC's criteria have been met, the Cushing site would be released for unrestricted use.

The findings at Cushing, and at other similar locations around the country, prompted NRC to initiate a nationwide review of contaminated sites ten years ago in order to assure they were decommissioned to NRC's health and safety requirements. Some of these sites had been previously licensed and released for unrestricted use by the AEC, some had never been licensed, and some still had active NRC licenses. This comprehensive review, called the Site Decommissioning Management Plan, currently tracks and oversees the decommissioning of approximately 34 nuclear materials sites throughout the country. Since the plan was initiated, 24 sites have been successfully remediated.

The environmental assessment and other documents related to this action are available at the NRC's Public Document Room at 2120 L Street, NW, Washington DC 20555-0001, telephone 202-634-3273.

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