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NRC ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF CLEANUP
AT TWO CONTAMINATED SITES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has announced that cleanup of radioactive contamination at two sites in Connecticut and Rhode Island has been completed satisfactorily, allowing all or portions of the properties to be released from NRC oversight.

The NRC will remove both sites from its Site Decommissioning Management Plan (SDMP) list, which identifies about 50 sites throughout the United States contaminated with radioactive material that receive special agency attention to ensure timely and safe cleanup.

United Nuclear Corporation

The Rhode Island site is located at Wood River Junction, primarily in the Town of Charlestown and partially in the Town of Richmond, in southwestern Rhode Island. United Nuclear Corporation (UNC) operated an enriched uranium scrap recovery facility there from 1964 to 1980. The reclaimed uranium was re-used as fuel for nuclear reactors.

UNC informed the NRC in April 1980 of its plan to terminate operations at Wood River Junction and clean up radioactive materials so as to make the site suitable for unrestricted use. Following extensive cleanup, the site now meets the NRC's criteria for unrestricted release with regard to any radiological hazards regulated by the NRC. Although non-radioactive nitrate groundwater contamination still exists in excess of the Environmental Protection Agency's drinking water standards, continued monitoring of that contamination is under the jurisdiction of the State of Rhode Island.

The NRC conducted a public meeting last December to describe its plan to terminate the UNC license and to answer questions from the public. On September 7 the agency published a Federal Register notice announcing its intention to release the site for unrestricted use and offering an opportunity to request a public hearing; no requests for a hearing were received.

United Technologies Corporation/Pratt & Whitney

(more)

This site, located in Middletown, Connecticut, is currently owned by United Technologies Corporation/Pratt & Whitney. Active operations for most portions of the facility ceased in December 1969, although one portion still has a separate NRC license to conduct unrelated activities involving radioactive materials.

The U.S. Government had acquired the property from private owners in the mid-1950's. Pratt & Whitney conducted research and development operations under contract to the U.S. Air Force, beginning in 1957, and later for the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC).

In 1966 the government sold the site to United Aircraft Corporation (then the parent company of Pratt & Whitney). That same year the AEC issued a license to Pratt & Whitney for possession of specified nuclear materials at the site. The company shut down operations in December 1969, and began decontamination in 1970. After the company completed its cleanup activities, the AEC terminated the license in 1971.

Building 450 was the primary location where radioactive material was used. In 1992, when Pratt & Whitney decided to raze portions of that building and renovate it for storage, a radiological survey revealed contamination above current NRC criteria for release of sites for unrestricted use. That same year an NRC contractor's review of terminated licenses identified the need for further review of the Pratt & Whitney license that included Building 450. License files lacked sufficient documentation to demonstrate that the site met current NRC release criteria.

Pratt & Whitney agreed to conduct further cleanup to meet current NRC standards. The agency added the site to its SDMP list to ensure a timely and effective cleanup.

After Pratt & Whitney completed the remediation, NRC surveys confirmed that the portion of the site associated with the terminated license now qualifies to be released for unrestricted use. NRC has therefore notified the company that further cleanup actions are not required and that the site and buildings are released for unrestricted use, except for the areas still under an active license.

The NRC published a notice August 1 in the Federal Register of its intent to release the site. No comments have been received.

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