

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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No. 96-190

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Thursday, December 26, 1996)

NRC CONSIDERING REQUEST FROM MASSACHUSETTS
FOR 'AGREEMENT STATE' STATUS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering a request from Massachusetts Gov. William F. Weld that Massachusetts assume part of NRC's regulatory authority over certain nuclear materials. If the agreement is accepted, Massachusetts will become the 30th state to sign such an agreement with NRC.

Under the agreement, NRC would transfer to Massachusetts the responsibility for licensing, rulemaking, inspection and enforcement concerning the use of (1) radioactive materials produced as byproducts of the operation of nuclear reactors; (2) uranium and thorium source materials; and (3) small quantities of fissionable materials.

The agreement also would allow the state to regulate the land disposal of radioactive waste and to conduct safety evaluations of sealed radioactive sources and devices for medical and industrial use. The agreement, however, would not cover regulation of tailings from uranium or thorium milling activities.

By law, NRC retains jurisdiction over regulation of nuclear reactors and other major nuclear facilities. It also continues to regulate Federal agencies which use nuclear materials and companies which distribute such materials (such as smoke detectors) to members of the public.

If the agreement is approved, about 420 NRC licenses, most of them for medical and industrial uses, would be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Before entering into the agreement, NRC must determine that the Commonwealth's radiation control program is adequate to protect public health and safety, and is compatible with the agency's own program for regulating the radioactive materials covered in the agreement.

The proposed agreement, along with an assessment of the Massachusetts proposed regulatory program, is published for public comment in the December 26 edition of the Federal Register, and also will be published once each week for the next three weeks. Comments should be sent to David L. Meyer, Chief, Rules Review and Directives Branch, Division of Freedom of Information and Publications Services, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001.

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