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NRC REJECTS PETITION FOR RULEMAKING

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has rejected a petition for rulemaking submitted by the states of Oregon and Washington seeking revisions in the Commission's current definition of high-level radioactive wastes.

In addition, the states asked the Commission to develop new standards which would have permitted the classification of radioactive wastes stored in tanks at the Department of Energy's Hanford (Washington) facility as high-level radioactive wastes subject to NRC licensing authority.

Under the petitioners' proposal, the Commission would have:

1. Established a process to evaluate the treatment of defense reprocessing wastes in tanks so that such wastes would not be considered high-level radioactive wastes if, prior to disposal, each tank were treated to remove the largest, technically-feasible amount of radioactivity; and
2. Required that the heat produced by residual radioactive materials, together with the heat of reaction during grout processing (if used as a treatment technology) would be within temperature limits for long-term stability of low-level radioactive wastes.

After reviewing the petition and the comments received on it, the NRC has concluded that the petition should be denied because the agency concludes that the principles for waste classification are well established and can be applied on a case-by-case basis without revisions to its regulations.

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