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NRC TERMINATES AMAX LICENSE
FOR WEST VIRGINIA FACILITY

Property near Parkersburg, West Virginia, that was formerly used to process certain radioactive ores has been stabilized and transferred to the Department of Energy. As a result, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has terminated the license for the site held by AMAX, Inc.

The original license was terminated in 1971, after accumulated processing residues and left-over ore were sent off-site to a low-level waste disposal facility. However, when AMAX sold the property in 1973 and the new owner began construction for a new factory, on two occasions the disturbed materials exploded or burned. No one was injured, but AMAX repurchased the property, NRC reinstated the license, and AMAX undertook remediation of the site.

In November 1982, an engineered disposal area on the site was completed. The area is about 15 acres in size and is surrounded by a 6-foot-high security fence. The contaminated soil has been retained in this area since 1982. Groundwater monitoring wells tested since then show no signs of leakage of radioactive materials from the disposal area.

The AMAX site was originally owned by Carborundum Company and is located in Washington Bottom, Wood County, West Virginia, on the eastern side of the Ohio River. It was used mainly to provide high-quality zirconium metal for the U.S. Navy's nuclear program. The plant started up in 1957 and was licensed under the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission because a particular zirconium ore (from Nigeria) that was used in the process contained a high enough concentration of thorium (a radioactive material) to require licensing. AMAX became the sole owner in 1967.

The site is subject to a special provision of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which required DOE to assume title and custody of the site and low-level radioactive waste located on it after (1) AMAX requested transfer of the site, (2) it was decontaminated and stabilized in accordance with requirements

established by the NRC, and (3) AMAX made financial arrangements, approved by the NRC, for the long-term maintenance and monitoring of the site.

These conditions have been met, and DOE has notified the NRC that it has assumed custody of the site and that title has been transferred to the United States. NRC has also removed the property from a list of about 50 sites that are contaminated with radioactive material and warrant special attention by the NRC.

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