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Tel. 301/415-8200

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NRC REVISES DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS FOR LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its documentation requirements for shipments of low-level radioactive waste intended for disposal at a licensed facility.

NRC regulations already require that each shipment of low-level waste intended for disposal at a licensed facility be accompanied by a manifest that describes the contents of the shipment and can be used to track the waste. The information addresses the requirements of not only the NRC, but also the Department of Transportation, state regulatory agencies and disposal facility operators. As a result, manifests are typically large, complex, multi-page documents.

Licensees who transfer low-level radioactive waste to a disposal facility--or to a licensed waste processor or collector who treats, repackages or collects waste--must prepare a manifest, retain a copy, and forward a copy to the intended recipient of the waste.

The NRC decided that improvements are needed because (1) the information reported on existing shipment manifests is inconsistent and does not meet all regulatory needs, (2) the information stored at existing low-level waste disposal facilities is similarly inconsistent and incomplete and (3) the information cannot be readily accessed and evaluated.

To accommodate the multiple parties who have a need for manifest information, the revised regulations require that shippers of low-level radioactive waste use a prescribed set of NRC forms that will serve as a national uniform low-level radioactive waste manifest. The revisions also require operators of low-level waste disposal facilities to electronically store the information until their license is terminated and to be capable of electronically reporting the stored information to the NRC.

Further details of the revised regulations are contained in a Federal Register notice published on March 24. The revisions will be effective on March 1, 1998.

Current operators of low-level waste disposal facilities are Chem-Nuclear Systems, Inc., which operates a facility at Barnwell, South Carolina; U.S. Ecology at Richland, Washington; and Envirocare of Utah, Inc., near Clive, Utah. Additional facilities are under consideration.

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