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NRC MAKES AVAILABLE STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS ON CLEANUP CRITERIA  
FOR WEST VALLEY SITE IN NEW YORK

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is making available staff recommendations on proposed criteria for residual radiation levels that would be permitted after cleanup of a site in West Valley, New York.

The Commission is presently reviewing these recommendations. The staff will brief the Commission on its suggestions at a public meeting to be announced later.

The West Valley site is currently being decommissioned and decontaminated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the New York State Energy Research and Development Administration (NYSERDA).

It was formerly used by Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) to reprocess spent nuclear fuel, and is the location of the only commercial spent fuel reprocessing plant that has operated in the United States. Reprocessing involves extracting usable uranium or plutonium from irradiated reactor fuel so that it can be re-used.

The West Valley Demonstration Project Act, enacted by Congress in 1980, authorizes DOE, in cooperation with NYSERDA, to carry out a liquid-high-level-waste management demonstration project that includes decommissioning. NRC responsibilities under the Act include issuing decontamination and decommissioning criteria for DOE activities at the site.

Details of the NRC staff's recommended decommissioning criteria for the site are contained in a paper, SECY-98-251, "Decommissioning Criteria for West Valley." The paper will be available at NRC public document rooms located at 2120 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. and at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Science and Technology Department, Lafayette Square, Buffalo, New York. In addition, electronic copies will be available through an NRC web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/COMMISSION/SECYS/index.html>.

The NRC staff paper also identifies regulatory alternatives for potential long-term control of the site.

Once the Commission decides on proposed criteria, the criteria will be included in environmental impact statement for decommissioning of the site that is being prepared jointly by DOE and NYSERDA and will be issued for public comment. The NRC will be a cooperating federal agency for the environmental impact statement, as permitted by the National Environmental Policy Act.

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