

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
8, 1997

Dec.

RIV 97-75

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Department of Energy

Carol Powell (510) 637-1814

John Belluardo (510) 637-1811

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Mark Hammond (510) 975-0254

Pager: (800) 916-4952

**MEETING SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS PILOT PROGRAM
FOR NRC OVERSIGHT AT DOE'S BERKELEY LABORATORY**

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the U.S. Department of Energy have scheduled a joint public meeting to outline a pilot program under which the NRC will provide simulated oversight at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, California.

The meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11, in Room NI-70 of the Oakland Federal Building, 1301 Clay Street, Oakland, California. A number of invitations have been issued to individuals and parties with an interest in the Berkeley Laboratory. Stakeholders are invited to comment on the pilot program in writing by Jan. 5. Meeting attendees will be required to show a picture ID because of federal building security requirements.

The pilot program at the Berkeley Laboratory is authorized by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in late November by NRC Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson and Energy Secretary Federico F. Pena. The memorandum also authorizes a pilot program for NRC oversight at DOE's Radiochemical Engineering Development Center in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and a spent fuel storage installation at DOE's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory in South Carolina.

The NRC and DOE envision similar pilot programs to be in place at a total of six to 10 DOE facilities within the next two years. The pilot programs are an important step in assessing the desirability of NRC safety regulation of certain DOE facilities. Full NRC regulation over certain DOE operations would require legislation and funding by Congress.

Major issues to be discussed at the meeting include the overall pilot program, the work plan being developed for the Berkeley Laboratory, and generic and site-specific issues affecting NRC oversight of DOE facilities.

The pilot program is the result of a recommendation in December 1995 by an advisory committee that DOE nuclear-related facilities be regulated by an external agency. A DOE working group later recommended that the NRC be the external regulator. The NRC's principal mission is ensuring public health and safety through the regulation of the 107 operating commercial nuclear power plants in the U.S. and a variety of licensed users of radioactive materials.

During the pilot phase, to run through early 1998, the program will use "simulated regulation," as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding, to test regulatory concepts at DOE facilities by evaluating them against standards established by the NRC, and will focus on areas of the greatest safety significance.

The NRC now provides technical assistance to DOE at its Tank Waste Remediation System at the Hanford Site near Richland, Washington, and at its West Valley Demonstration Project in West Valley, New York. The NRC also regulates gaseous diffusion enrichment plants operated by the US Enrichment Corp., which leases them from DOE.

The Berkeley Laboratory, a multi-program national research institute managed for the DOE by the University of California, performs nonclassified research in biological, physical, materials, chemical, energy, environmental and earth sciences. Founded in 1931, it employs a staff of nearly 3,500 people and has an annual budget of more than \$340 million.

The Laboratory operates national user facilities, including the Advanced Light Source (ALS), which produces the world's brightest x-rays for research; the National Center for Electron Microscopy (NCEM), which houses the country's most powerful microscopes; and the 88-inch Cyclotron, which has areas for conducting experiments in nuclear sciences, life sciences and radiation damage in semiconductors.

A Web site has been established for the public to access information on the pilot program: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NMSS/doepilot.html>.

###