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**NRC ISSUES DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR REVIEWING FUTURE LICENSE APPLICATION  
FOR HANFORD TANK WASTE REMEDIATION**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards has issued draft guidance for the NRC staff to review a possible future license application for immobilizing highly radioactive waste in underground tanks at the Department of Energy (DOE) reservation in Hanford, Washington.

DOE established a program, known as the Tank Waste Remediation System, in 1993 after entering into an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology for timely cleanup of the wastes, which result from Cold War weapons production at the Hanford site. The cleanup system is designed to integrate all aspects of the treatment and management of the high-level radioactive wastes located in 177 underground storage tanks at the site.

DOE has indicated that it plans to privatize the remediation. DOE plans call for a Tank Waste Remediation System privatized facility to be designed and constructed on the Hanford reservation, and owned and operated by a DOE contractor. Last August, DOE signed a contract with BNFL, Inc., a subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuels, plc., to design, build and operate a permanent facility to treat initially about 10 percent of the waste.

At the present time, NRC is assisting DOE in developing an effective regulatory program for proposed licensing, with the possibility that NRC may assume regulatory authority in the future. NRC and DOE interactions during this initial phase are governed by a memorandum of understanding signed in January 1997. The NRC advisory work is covered by a specific Congressional appropriation.

The recently released draft guidance, known as a "standard review plan," provides guidance for the evaluation of health, safety and environmental protection in a license application. Its principal purpose is to ensure quality and uniformity of staff reviews of the application and any later amendments to the license.

Copies of the "Standard Review Plan for the Review of a License Application for the Tank Waste Remediation System Privatization (TWRS-P) Project -- Draft Report for Comment" (NUREG-1702) are available by written request to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Distribution Services, Washington, DC 20555-0001. It may also be reviewed at the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20555-0001. A copy is also posted on the NRC's Internet web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NUREGS/indexnum.html>.

Interested persons are invited to submit comments within 90 days after publication of a Federal Register notice on this subject, which is expected shortly. Written comments should be

directed to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Comments may also be submitted electronically by selecting the "comments" link on the above web site.

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