



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 00-153

October 6, 2000

NRC STAFF ISSUES SAFETY EVALUATION REPORT ON PROPOSED SPENT FUEL STORAGE FACILITY IN UTAH

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued its safety evaluation report (SER) on Private Fuel Storage L.L.C.'s (PFS) application to build a spent fuel storage facility on the Reservation of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians near Tooele County, Utah. The review finds that the facility and the casks that would store the spent fuel would be safe and meet regulatory requirements.

In its June 20, 1997, application, PFS proposed to store spent fuel generated from commercial nuclear power plants in the United States for a twenty-year period above ground in large casks. Issuance of the safety evaluation report marks another step in the safety and environmental review in the on-going licensing process required by the NRC.

The safety evaluation report describes in detail the type of casks proposed for use at the facility, geographical characteristics of the site, proposed facility operations, radiation protection features, decommissioning plans, safety and accident analyses, emergency planning, financial qualifications of the applicant, and other features of the facility.

The proposed facility, about 50 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, would use NRC-approved Holtec International HI-STORM 100 storage casks. The HI-STORM cask consists of a canister in which the spent fuel is stored, and a steel and concrete overpack. To shield the radioactive material, the canister is welded closed and then placed in an overpack of two steel shells encasing a 27-inch wall of concrete. The concrete provides additional shielding from radiation during storage. The cask weighs 180 tons when full.

The SER concludes that the application demonstrates the proposed facility would satisfy applicable Commission safety requirements during normal, unusual, and accident conditions. Among the hazards analyzed by PFS were a cask drop, flood, fire, lightning, earthquake, and tornadoes. In addition, hazards from nearby activities also were considered, including explosions and aircraft crashes.

As part of the review process, the agency's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board held hearings on PFS' application in June, in Salt Lake City. Members of the public were afforded an opportunity to make brief oral statements of their views at this time. That same month, the NRC staff issued a draft environmental impact statement for comment, and held public meetings over the summer in Salt Lake

City and Grantsville, Utah. Public comments will be factored into a final environmental impact statement, currently scheduled for release the early part of next year.

Before a decision is made whether to issue a license, the Licensing Board will hold additional hearing sessions on remaining safety and environmental contentions, currently scheduled for next summer. Also, three other federal agencies - - the Surface Transportation Board, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs -- must complete actions associated with the PFS proposal.

Copies of the safety evaluation report are available on the agency's web page, at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NMSS/SFPO/SER/PFS/index.html>

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