



NRC NEWS

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July 22, 2002

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NRC TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS WITH FRAMATOME ANP, INC.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference Friday, July 26, with officials of Framatome ANP, Inc., of Richland, Wash., to discuss several apparent violations of NRC requirements.

The conference will begin at 8:30 a.m. at NRC Region IV offices in Arlington, Texas. The meeting will be open to public observation; NRC officials will be available for questions before the meeting is adjourned.

Framatome manufactures uranium fuel used in commercial power reactors. There are times during fuel fabrication and handling when, without the proper safety controls, uranium could be present in sufficient quantity to lead to a fission chain reaction. The apparent violations involve the failure of Framatome to properly maintain all the required safety controls during a certain uranium handling process.

Specifically, on April 3, a Framatome worker filled a 45-gallon drum with uranium oxide powder. The drum is required to have a neutron-absorbing fixture inside as one of the controls to prevent an uncontrolled criticality. The worker observed that the drum did not have the required fixture, and reported the event to plant management. An inspection team from the NRC was sent to review the incident April 15-18. The team found five apparent violations; however, the NRC does not believe that a fission chain was possible at any time because other conditions required for such an event were not present.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final determination that violations did occur or that enforcement action, such as a monetary fine, will be taken. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance. The meeting will also provide Framatome officials with an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report and to present its corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later time.

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