



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 03-127

October 3, 2003

NRC'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FINDS NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FROM PROPOSED BLEU PROJECT PREPARATION FACILITY

An environmental assessment by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has found no significant impact from a proposed Blended Low-Enriched Uranium (BLEU) Preparation Facility at the Nuclear Fuel Services Inc. (NFS) site in Erwin, Tennessee.

The NRC's "finding of no significant impact" is an important step toward approval of the second of three license amendments to allow NFS to pursue the BLEU project. This finding does not represent approval of the license amendment.

The BLEU project is part of a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) program to reduce stockpiles of surplus high-enriched (weapons grade) uranium through re-use or disposal as radioactive waste. Re-use is considered the favorable option by DOE because weapons grade uranium is converted to a form unsuited for weapons production, the product can be used for peaceful purposes, and the commercial value of the uranium can be recovered. Re-use is also considered preferable because it avoids unnecessary use of limited radioactive waste disposal space.

NFS currently manufactures high-enriched nuclear reactor fuel and is constructing a new complex at the Erwin site to manufacture low-enriched nuclear reactor fuel.

The NRC approved the first license amendment in July, allowing NFS to begin receiving down-blended, low-enriched uranium from the Savannah River Site complex in South Carolina for eventual use in the BLEU project.

In the second amendment request, filed last October, NFS is seeking NRC permission to begin processing operations at an existing building within the protected area of its Erwin site. The company has not yet formally applied for the third license amendment, which will be for an oxide conversion facility. Together, the three amendments make up the BLEU project.

The environmental assessment, dated September 17, is available through the NRC's ADAMS document management system, on the internet at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>, with accession number ML032390428. For assistance in using ADAMS, contact the agency's Public Document Room at 301-415-4737, or 1-800-397-4209.

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