



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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No. II-04-002

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January 8, 2004

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ORAL ARGUMENT ON DUKE'S APPLICATION TO USE MIXED OXIDE NUCLEAR FUEL SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 15 IN CHARLOTTE

A Nuclear Regulatory Commission Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will hear oral argument Thursday, January 15, on supplemental contentions raised by the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League in the proceeding involving Duke Energy's application to use mixed oxide, or MOX, test assemblies at the Catawba Nuclear Station near Rock Hill, SC. The proceeding will be held in Courtroom 2 of the U.S. Courthouse, 401 W. Trade Street in Charlotte, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

The three-member Licensing Board is chaired by Administrative Judge Ann Marshall Young and also includes Administrative Judges Anthony J. Baratta and Dr. Thomas S. Elleman. During the session in Charlotte, which will be open to public observation, the panel will hear argument on the contentions but no decision on the admissibility of those contentions will be made until later.

In February 2003, Duke Energy filed an application to amend the operating license at Catawba to allow the use of four MOX test assemblies at the plant. The NRC technical staff is currently reviewing that application. After a July 2003 Federal Register notice on the Duke application, the Nuclear Information and Resource Service and Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League filed to intervene and requested a hearing.

MOX fuel would be produced by combining surplus plutonium from dismantled nuclear weapons with uranium into a form that can be used by nuclear power plants. A planned MOX fabrication facility, which would be U.S. Government-owned and located at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site in South Carolina, would also be subject to NRC requirements.

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