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Autres publications



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[Chapter 7 - Radiological and biomedical activities](#)



[Chapter 8 - Industrial and research activities](#)



[Chapter 9 - Radioactive material transportation](#)



[Chapter 10 - Pressurised water reactor](#)



[Chapter 11 - Nuclear research facilities and various nuclear installations](#)



[Chapter 12 - Nuclear fuel cycle installations](#)



[Chapter 13 - Safe shutdown and dismantling of basic nuclear installations](#)



[Chapter 14 - Radioactive waste, clean-up and polluted sites](#)

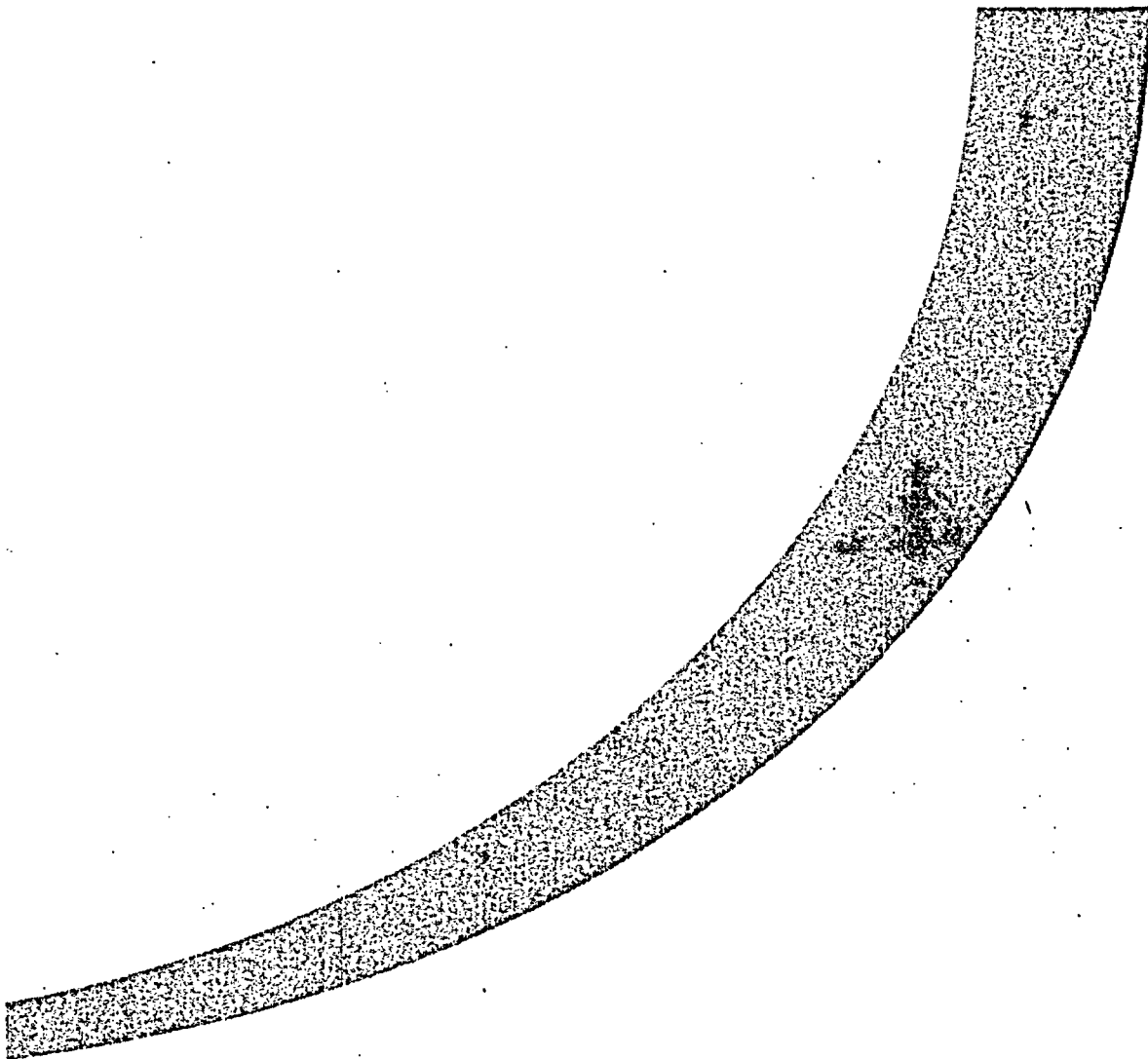


[Chapter 15 - Health and ionising radiation](#)



Directorate General
for Nuclear Safety
and Radiation Protection

NUCLEAR SAFETY IN FRANCE IN 2002



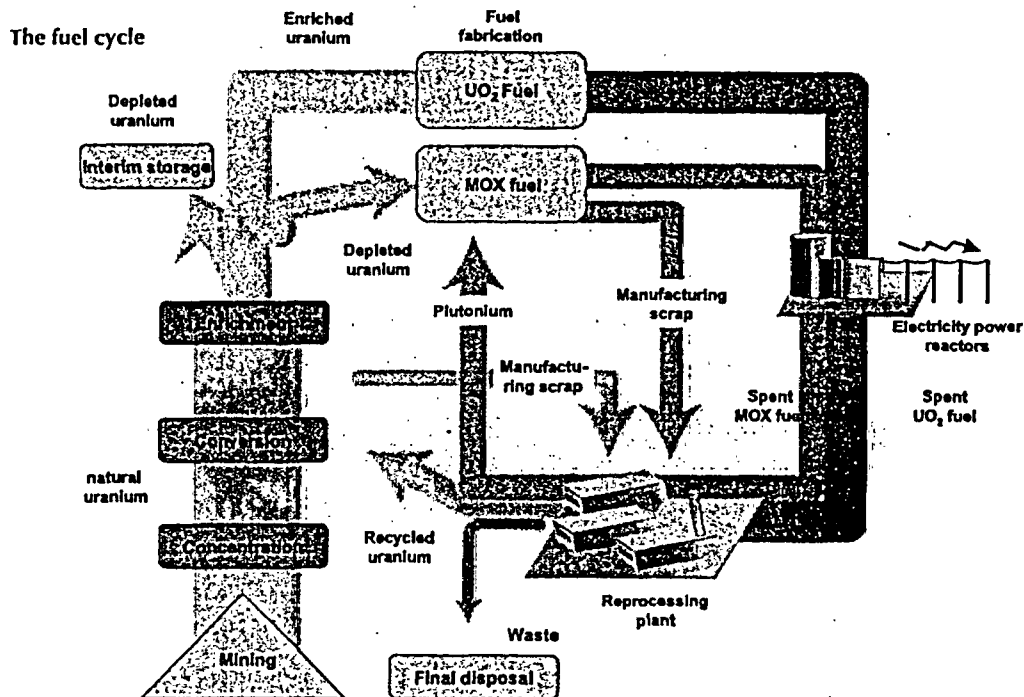
NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE INSTALLATIONS

- 1 MAIN TOPICS COMMON TO ALL INSTALLATIONS
 - 1|1 Fuel cycle consistency
 - 1|2 Retrieval of La Hague waste due to past practices
 - 1|3 Revision of the RFS on fire outbreaks in installations other than reactors
 - 1|4 Revision of release licences
 - 1|5 Incident management and operating feedback
 - 1|6 Flooding hazards

- 2 MAIN INSTALLATIONS
 - 2|1 Uranium conversion and processing plants
 - 2|1|1 Comurhex uranium hexafluoride preparation plant
 - 2|1|2 COGEMA TUS shop and W plant
 - 2|1|3 COGEMA plant at Miramas
 - 2|2 Eurodif uranium isotope separation plant at Pierrelatte
 - 2|3 Nuclear fuel fabrication plants
 - 2|3|1 Nuclear site at Romans-sur-Isère
 - 2|3|2 SICN facility at Veurey-Voroize
 - 2|3|3 Plutonium technology shop (ATPu) and chemical purification laboratory (LPC) at Cadarache
 - 2|3|4 MELOX plant at Marcoule
 - 2|4 COGEMA La Hague complex
 - 2|4|1 Presentation
 - 2|4|2 Operations carried out in the plant
 - 2|4|3 Regulatory framework for the facilities
 - 2|4|4 UP2 400 plant
 - 2|4|5 UP2 800 plant
 - 2|4|6 UP3 plant
 - 2|4|7 Site release licences
 - 2|4|8 The marine discharge pipe
 - 2|4|9 Environmental surveillance
 - 2|4|10 Work of the experts on the environmental and health impact of the complex

- 3 THE NUCLEAR SAFETY AUTHORITY'S POSITION

CHAPTER 12



Manufacture of the fuel and its subsequent reprocessing after it has passed through the nuclear reactors constitute the fuel cycle. The cycle begins with the extraction of uranium ore and ends with storage of a variety of radioactive waste originating from the irradiated fuel or from the industrial operations involved and utilising radioactive materials.

The uranium ore is mined, purified and concentrated into yellow-cake on the mining site. The installations involved use natural uranium, where the uranium 235 content is about 0.7%. They are not subject to BNI regulations.

Most of the world's reactors use uranium which is slightly enriched with uranium 235. For example, the PWR series requires uranium enriched to between 3 and 4%. Prior to enrichment, the solid yellow-cake is converted into uranium hexafluoride gas during the conversion operation. This is done in the Comurhex facilities in Malvési (Aude department) and Pierrelatte (Drôme department).

In the Eurodif plant at Tricastin, the uranium hexafluoride is separated into two streams using a gaseous diffusion process, one relatively rich in uranium 235 and the other depleted.

The enriched uranium hexafluoride is then converted into uranium oxide to allow manufacture of fuel assemblies in the FBFC plants at Romans-sur-Isère. The assemblies are then placed in the reactor core where they release power by fission of the uranium 235 nuclei.

After about three years, the spent fuel is removed from the reactor and cooled in a pit, first of all on the plant site and then in the COGEMA reprocessing plant at La Hague.

In this plant, the uranium and plutonium from the spent fuels are separated from the fission products and the other actinides. The uranium and plutonium are packaged for interim storage before subsequent reuse. The radioactive waste is placed in a surface repository if low-level, or in interim storage pending an appropriate disposal solution.

The plutonium produced by reprocessing can be used to make fuel for fast neutron reactors (as was the case in the ATPu at Cadarache), or MOX fuel (uranium and plutonium mixed oxide), used in French 900 MWe PWRs, in the ATPu shop or in the Marcoule MELOX plant.

The vast majority of the plants in the cycle belong to the COGEMA group. It should however be noted that the uranium-based fuel manufacturing plants are operated by FBFC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Framatome-ANP. The COGEMA group is a subsidiary of AREVA. Its organisation comprises an executive committee, four activity areas (Mines-chemistry, Enrichment, Processing-recycling-engineering, Services) grouping 11 business units (operational result centres), corporate functions and an operational committee. Fuel cycle BNIs depend on the business units covering Chemistry (Comurhex, TU5, W, COGEMA Miramas), Enrichment (Eurodif), Processing (COGEMA La Hague), Recycling (ATPu, MELOX), Mechanical engineering (SICN).

Fuel cycle industry throughput

Facility	Material processed	Product obtained
Comurhex Pierrelatte	Uranyl nitrate (reprocessed uranium)	UF ₄ : 0 ton UF ₆ : 0 ton U ₃ O ₈ : 497 tons
COGEMA Pierrelatte TU5 shop W plant	Uranyl nitrate (reprocessed uranium) UF ₆ (depleted uranium)	U ₃ O ₈ : 1496 tons U ₃ O ₈ : 15058 tons Total U ₃ O ₈ on-site interim storage U ₃ O ₈ : 115,461 tons
Eurodif Pierrelatte	UF ₆ (natural uranium): 21,366 tons	UF ₆ (depleted uranium): 19,320 tons UF ₆ (enriched uranium): 2438 tons
FBFC Romans	UF ₆ (enriched uranium): 1747 tons UF ₆ (enriched reprocessed uranium): 27 tons	UO ₂ (powder): 1200 tons including 356 shipped UO ₂ (fuel elements): 785 tons UO ₂ (reprocessed uranium fuel elements): 24 tons
ATPu Cadarache	UO ₂ (depleted uranium): 43,7 tons PuO ₂ : 3,3 tons	MOX (fuel rods): 44,1 tons
MELOX Marcoule	UO ₂ (depleted uranium): 103,48 tons PuO ₂ : 7,49 tons	MOX (fuel rods): 100,53 tons
COGEMA La Hague	Spent fuel elements Quantities processed: UP3: 509,9 tons UP2 300: 550,7 tons UP2 400: 0 ton Spent fuel elements offloaded into the spent fuel pits: 1348,6 tons	Vitrified waste packages produced: UP3: 291 containers UP2 300: 321 containers UN produced: 1086 tons PuO ₂ produced: 10,4 tons