



NRC's Role in the Review of DOE Regulatory Processes for the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant

WHO: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is an independent regulatory agency that is separate from the Department of Energy (DOE). The NRC was created as an independent agency by Congress in 1974. The NRC's mission is to license and regulate the Nation's civilian use of radioactive material to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety, promote common defense and security, and protect the environment. The NRC regulates commercial nuclear power plants and other nuclear facilities and nuclear materials. More information about the NRC is available at www.nrc.gov.

WHAT: The NRC has been tasked with conducting a review of the DOE regulatory processes for the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant (WTP).

The Report for the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2008 states: "In cooperation with the Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is directed to review the regulatory processes of the Department for the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant and report its assessment and recommendations to the Secretary of Energy and the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations within 180 days of enactment."

HOW: This review will consist of an evaluation of DOE regulations, requirements, orders, and guidance for the Hanford WTP from the perspective of the NRC regulatory framework, which applies to commercial facilities. The review will be limited to safety and environmental programs and activities specific to the WTP. The review will not be a detailed design or license review, a detailed audit of DOE implementation of its requirements, or an assessment of security threat or vulnerability. There will be no review of security, MC&A, emergency planning, management of plant output, or decommissioning. Congress expects the NRC and DOE to cooperate in conducting the review to ensure a mutual understanding of the approach, results, and recommendations for the Congressional Report.

Unless expressly authorized by statute, the NRC does not have authority to license or otherwise regulate DOE facilities. Under the existing statutory framework, the NRC does not have licensing or general regulatory authority over DOE's activities at the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant.

WHEN: A report is due to Congress in late June 2008. It may include options and recommendations for future oversight of the WTP.

The NRC values the involvement of stakeholders and will respond to stakeholder questions or concerns. NRC staff plans to meet again with stakeholders once the report has been finalized. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Patti Silva at 301-492-3114 or e-mail her at pas6@nrc.gov.