



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. II-10-001

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January 7, 2010

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NRC ISSUES CONFIRMATORY ACTION LETTER TO NUCLEAR FUEL SERVICES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today sent a letter to Nuclear Fuel Services detailing the company's commitments for actions to assure the agency that NFS can safely operate the plant. The company has agreed to suspend production at its Erwin, Tenn., facility until the items are completed.

The NRC's confirmatory action letter is designed to address issues that contributed to recent events at the facility, including an Oct. 13 incident being reviewed by an NRC augmented inspection team. The letter is being issued to detail and confirm NFS's agreement to take certain actions in response to shortcomings identified by the inspection team. Although NFS can continue work in other areas such as construction and transportation, the company has agreed that the process lines at the facility will remain out of service until the NRC is satisfied that the issues have been addressed. The NRC will verify through further inspections that the items in the letter have been successfully completed before production is resumed.

The NFS commitments include:

- Obtaining independent reviews of restart actions as well as company event investigation processes
- Changing the way the company handles materials based on lessons learned from the Oct. 13 event
- Making permanent improvements in the methods for identifying, documenting, evaluating and communicating all changes at the facility
- Re-evaluating certain accident scenarios to ensure the appropriate level of safety
- Changing the NFS management structure to ensure separation between production goals and safety priorities

"This letter clearly lays out the NRC's expectations for both short and long-term actions that NFS will take to address the concerns our inspectors have identified," said NRC Region II Administrator Luis Reyes. "We believe suspending operations is appropriate given the current situation, and the lines will not restart until NFS meets its commitments."

Although a date has not been confirmed, the NRC will schedule a public meeting in Erwin in the next few weeks to discuss the preliminary results of the agency's detailed inspection

after the Oct. 13 event. That incident involved workers using nitric acid to dissolve scrap material with small quantities of uranium. It resulted in more heat than expected and the generation of nitrogen compound fumes. There were no injuries to employees or environmental releases, but the heated fumes damaged some pipes. The NRC inspection is expected to be completed soon.

Issuance of a confirmatory action letter does not preclude the NRC from taking other actions for any violations of NRC requirements that may be identified.

“We will continue to inspect and review their activities and will not hesitate to take additional actions if necessary,” Reyes added.

A copy of the confirmatory action letter will be available on the NRC Web site at www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html using the number ML100070118 or from the Region II Office of Public Affairs.

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