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NRC ISSUES DRAFT SAFETY EVALUATION REPORT FOR PROPOSED MIXED-OXIDE FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY AT SAVANNAH RIVER

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has published its draft Safety Evaluation Report (SER) for the license application by Shaw AREVA MOX Services, LLC, to possess and use radioactive material at the Mixed-Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site near Aiken, S.C.

The report, which has been redacted to remove security related and proprietary information, documents the NRC staff's technical safety review of MOX Services' operating license application for the facility. It does not represent a decision to issue the license. A license will be issued only if the NRC verifies the applicant has properly constructed principal structures, systems and components. That stage is expected to be several years away.

The report contains the staff's conclusion that the applicant's descriptions, specifications, commitments and analyses provide an adequate basis for safety and safeguards of facility operations, and that operation of the facility would not pose an undue risk to worker and public health and safety.

The NRC issued a Construction Authorization for the facility in March 2005, and construction is underway. The facility is part of an agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to dismantle thousands of Cold War-era nuclear weapons by using the plutonium from warheads to manufacture fuel for civilian nuclear power reactors. The facility would combine plutonium and uranium oxides to make the mixed-oxide, or MOX, fuel. It is the only MOX fuel fabrication facility being built in the United States.

The draft SER reviews the applicant's financial qualifications, plans for protection of classified matter, organization and administration, integrated safety analysis, nuclear criticality safety, fire protection, chemical safety, radiation safety, environmental protection and plant systems.

The redacted SER for the MOX facility is available on the NRC website at <http://www.nrc.gov/materials/fuel-cycle-fac/mox/license-application.html>. More information about the MOX review is available at <http://www.nrc.gov/materials/fuel-cycle-fac/mox/licensing.html>.

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