

Summary

Public Meeting between Nuclear Regulatory Commission and U.S. Department of Energy Staff regarding H-Area Tank Farm Section 3116 Consultation

July 21, 2014
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm scheduled (meeting ended at 8:15 pm)

Both the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) staff offered brief opening remarks affirming the purpose and desired outcome of the meeting. NRC staff provided a brief summary of NRC's role in the National Defense Authorization act (NDAA) consultation process and the three criteria that are specified in the NDAA.

The remainder of the meeting focused on the contents of a slide presentation by NRC technical staff (Enclosure 3). The presentation covered NRC's consulting role per NDAA; the consultation chronology; review results and recommendations related to the three NDAA criteria; and review examples.

DOE questioned NRC's recommendation regarding tank contaminant inventory if oxalic acid could not be deployed (Slide 11). It was explained that NRC was concerned, absent oxalic acid deployment, that a potentially significant contaminant inventory could remain on the thousands of feet of cooling coil in some tanks.

DOE requested clarification on NRC's recommendation related to additional cleaning of the annulus of Tank 16 (Slide 11). DOE is in the process of evaluating the practicality of additional cleaning. At the time of completion of the Technical Evaluation Report (TER), NRC, while aware the process was underway, had not seen the process play out and that given the uncertainty in potential risks associated with preferential pathways through the annulus, NRC staff believed the practicality of additional removal should be revisited once the uncertainties were adequately evaluated.

DOE also requested clarification regarding the basis for NRC's review result that the amount of material in the Tank 16 annulus is potentially significant and that DOE has not appropriately evaluated the associated risks (Slide 9). NRC staff clarified that the amount of material in the Tank 16 annulus approximates the material assumed to remain within primary containment of other tanks (e.g., Tank 15) and that DOE's modeling results suggested the potential for significant releases should a preferential pathway exist through the annulus. DOE expressed concern that some of the results provided as examples at the meeting by NRC staff were doses from peak realizations rather than mean doses. NRC staff clarified that while DOE's modeling results informed the review result, the primary motivation was that there is uncertainty in the level of risk associated with the waste remaining in the annulus that has not been adequately evaluated. NRC staff explained that because there is evidence for preferential flow paths through the Tank 16 vault (from past leakage) and DOE provided only limited modeling of preferential pathways through the Tank 16 annulus, combined with the assumption for high solubility of radionuclides in the waste, NRC staff believes the uncertainty warrants an expanded evaluation of fast flow pathways through the annulus as described more fully in the TER.

A member of the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) suggested that the CAB be specifically notified of future public meetings such as this one for better attendance. NRC staff informed the member that the waste management subcommittee of the CAB was on NRC's mailing list which provides notifications when documents are published and meetings are announced, and that NRC could also include the full CAB if requested.