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NRC Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Changes to Regulations on Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeks public comment on proposed amendments to its regulations governing the disposal of low-level radioactive waste. The amendments would require licensees to update their technical analyses and conduct new analyses to demonstrate their facilities' ability to dispose of long-lived low-level waste.

The amendments, in a proposed rule published March 26 in the [Federal Register](#), are designed to ensure safe disposal of certain low-level wastes that were not considered when the regulations were originally written in the 1980s. The proposed rule would require licensees to:

- Update their site-specific technical analysis to include a performance assessment covering 10,000 years;
- Conduct a new site-specific technical analysis for the protection of inadvertent intruders over 10,000 years;
- Conduct a new performance analysis beyond 10,000 years for certain long-lived low-level wastes if the site were to dispose of them; and
- Revise the application for closure to include updates to the technical analysis.

The proposed rule would also add a new requirement to develop criteria for the acceptance of low-level waste for disposal based either on the results of these technical analyses or on the existing waste classification requirements.

This rule would affect low-level waste disposal licensees or license applicants that are regulated by the NRC or the Agreement States (the 37 states that regulate radioactive materials under agreements with the NRC).

The proposed rule anticipates a need to dispose of large quantities of depleted uranium from newly licensed uranium enrichment facilities. Depleted uranium actually becomes more radioactive as it decays over centuries, and the current regulations did not anticipate large quantities of it being disposed of commercially as Class A low-level waste (the least radioactive classification). In addition, the industry anticipates blending some Class A waste with more-radioactive Class B and Class C wastes that currently lack a disposal path. Blending could create large quantities of Class A waste near

the upper classification limit of radioactivity. The current regulations anticipated only a small amount of waste near the upper limit.

Comments will be accepted until July 24. They may be submitted over the federal government's rulemaking website, www.regulations.gov, using Docket ID NRC-2011-0012. They may also be faxed to 301-415-1101; emailed to Rulemaking.Comments@nrc.gov; or mailed to Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C., 20555-0001, ATTN: Rulemaking and Adjudications Staff.