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NRC Announces Hearing Opportunity on Proposed License Amendment to the Church Rock Mill Site in New Mexico

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has announced the opportunity to request an adjudicatory hearing on United Nuclear Corp.'s proposal to move mine waste onto the Church Rock mill site in northwestern New Mexico.

The hearing opportunity was announced in a *Federal Register* [notice](#) published March 13. The notice provides detailed instructions on how to file a request, including requirements for demonstrating standing and submitting specific contentions admissible in a hearing. Hearing requests are due by May 13.

United Nuclear, a subsidiary of General Electric, is seeking an amendment to its NRC license that would authorize the transfer of approximately 1 million cubic yards of contaminated soil, known as "mine spoils," from the North East Church Rock mine to the nearby Church Rock uranium mill site for disposal at the mill's waste facility, called a "tailings impoundment." The mill is located about 17 miles northeast of Church Rock, N.M., adjacent to the Navajo Reservation.

In a *Federal Register* [notice](#) published Feb. 8, the NRC announced its intention to prepare an environmental impact statement on the proposed transfer. The agency staff is seeking public comments to help define the scope of the environmental review. The *Federal Register* notice provides detailed instructions for submitting comments, which will be accepted through April 19.

The Church Rock uranium mill operated from 1977 to 1982, processing uranium ore from the Northeast Church Rock Mine under a state of New Mexico license. Since 1988, the mill has been under dual regulatory oversight of the NRC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, under a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies. The NRC is the lead agency regulating surface reclamation and closure activities at the site under an NRC license and the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978. The EPA is the lead agency regulating cleanup of the mine.

UNC's proposal to dispose of the mine spoils at the mill site is part of a broader cleanup action by the EPA under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability process. Stakeholders involved in this action include the NRC, EPA, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Energy and the New Mexico Environment Department.