

MR. MYERS: Decommissioning plans are currently approved on a case-by-case basis using technical guidelines. Is this the most cost-effective, and efficient way to conduct decommissioning activities? Is the NRC looking at alternatives?

CHAIRMAN JACKSON:

Efficiency and certainty in the decommissioning process can be improved by establishing radiological criteria standards. This is the reason why NRC initiated the development of the radiological criteria rulemaking in 1993.

Case-by-case evaluations, however, offer flexibility to determine optimal approaches to ensure protection of the public and the environment.

NRC's existing regulations do not require submission of decommissioning plans for NRC review, except for larger, more complicated decommissioning projects. NRC's requirements in 10 CFR Part 50 require power reactor and non-power reactor licensees to submit proposed decommissioning plans for NRC review. In July 1995, NRC proposed revisions to these regulations that would eliminate the requirement for submission for NRC review of decommissioning plans for power reactors. In place of the decommissioning plans, the proposed rule would require licensees to submit a Post Shutdown Activities Report for information, rather than formal NRC review. The proposed rule would not affect current requirements for submission of decommissioning plans at non-power reactors (test, research, and experimental reactors).

For nuclear materials licensees other than independent spent fuel and high-level waste storage facilities, NRC's existing regulations only require submission of decommissioning plans for NRC review if one is required as a condition of the license or if the decommissioning procedures and activities have not been previously approved by the Commission and these procedures could increase potential health and safety impacts to workers or to the public. NRC regulations in 10 CFR Parts 30, 40, and 70, identify specific examples for when submission of decommissioning plans is required, such as when decommissioning procedures involve techniques not applied routinely during cleanup or maintenance operations. NRC requires licensees to submit

decommissioning plans for independent spent fuel and high-level waste storage facilities.

Most decommissioning of nuclear materials facilities (by number) is conducted without the benefit of an NRC approved decommissioning plan. For most small NRC materials licensees, decommissioning is accomplished by transferring long-lived radioactive material such as sealed sources to an authorized recipient and by the natural decay of short-lived isotopes such as most medical diagnostic tracers.

NRC is considering significant issues and alternatives to the existing decommissioning program as part of Strategic Assessment.