

# PUBLIC SUBMISSION

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Regulatory Improvements for Production and Utilization Facilities Transitioning to Decommissioning

**Comment On:** NRC-2015-0070-0229

Regulatory Improvements for Production and Utilization Facilities Transitioning to Decommissioning

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## General Comment

I have extremely grave concerns that the Proposed Decommissioning Rule weakens the safety provisions in the decommissioning process for both citizens and the environment. NRC's decommissioning regulations put far too much authority in the hands of the profit-driven nuclear industry. The NRC is charged with protecting public health and the environment. The current draft of the rules must be withdrawn and revised, to strengthen rather than weaken local community and state engagement, and the NRC must take responsibility for ensuring that public safety and environmental protection are prioritized throughout the full decommissioning process. In an example, I read this week that WA State's Hanford site agreed to plan an agreement FINALLY for leakage that was detected in 2013! They agreed to plan to agree, nine years later?! As if leaks were a surprise? If you have children or grandchildren, you must do better!

**Public Input:** The Proposed Rule omits post-operational licensing decisions or public hearings, eliminating any accountability by NRC or reactor licensees for the adequacy of safety and environmental protection measures for post-operational activities (I.e reactor decommissioning, emergency planning, security). This lack of accountability would persist decades from now as over 90 operating U.S. reactors cease to operate. Lacking public engagement, the Proposed Rule cannot guide the NRC to protect public health and the human environment.

**Atomic Energy Act compliance:** The proposed rule violates the AEA and the U.S. Court of Appeals decision of First Circuit in Citizens Awareness Network v. NRC, 59 F.3d 284 (1st Cir. 1995) ("CAN v. NRC") by failing to provide for NRC licensing approval and public hearing opportunities for post-operational decisions on decommissioning, emergency planning, and security. The NRC should require reactor licensees to formulate dismantlement and decommissioning plans and submit them to NRC for licensing approval, with an opportunity for state and local governments and interested members of the public to request a hearing on the adequacy of the plans to satisfy NRC safety and environmental requirements. More importantly, these measures are REQUIRED by the Atomic Energy Act, under CAN v. NRC.

**Safety:** I have grave concerns about the provisions for emergency planning and response, which are delegated to

FEMA and local governments in the proposed changes. After fuel has been in the spent fuel pool for ONLY 10 MONTHS, “the rule would eliminate the requirements for dedicated radiological offsite emergency planning, emergency planning zones (EPZs), and public alert and notification systems.” This raises serious issues for public safety. Neither FEMA nor local responders are prepared to handle radiological emergencies, and the responsibility for this rightly belongs to the industry. Likewise, the Emergency Response Data System should continue to be required until all spent fuel is removed from the reactor site.

**Environment:** The proposed changes undermine environmental protections. They drop the requirement for an environmental impact review until after the process is completed and weaken the environmental information in the Post-Shut Down Decommissioning Activities Report. A site-specific NEPA review of the process should occur early in the decommissioning process and should provide opportunities for local stakeholders to be informed and involved by offering the interested public an opportunity for a hearing, with appropriate protections for the fairness of the hearing process.

**Time limits:** The time period for site clean up should be reduced from 60 years to as soon as possible, not more than 10 years, with due consideration for worker and public health, safety and environmental justice. The NRC must not abdicate its responsibility to review and approve irradiated fuel management programs. This proposed change sacrifices public and environmental safety in favor of the interests of the nuclear industry. Rather, regular NRC inspections, oversight, and reporting on decommissioning activities should be required.

**Accountability:** The proposed changes weaken the financial responsibility of the industry, which should be required to have secure funding for the FULL process when a nuclear power plant stops producing energy, and these funds must not be allowed to be used for other purposes.

Ensuring the safety of the public and the environment must be prioritized throughout the ENTIRE decommissioning process. The NRC must do MORE, not less, to exercise oversight and hold the industry accountable throughout the process. The current proposed rules weaken the authority of the NRC and make health and safety of people and environment subordinate to the profit in the industry. This is UNACCEPTABLE. The rules must be revised. The Commission should correct its course and comply with the court’s decision in CAN v. NRC by restoring the regulatory framework of the 1988 Decommissioning Rule.