
PART 18, APPENDIX A CRITERIA RELATING TO THE OPERATION OF MILLS AND THE DISPOSITION OF THE TAILINGS OR WASTES FROM THESE OPERATIONS

Introduction: Every applicant for a license to possess and use radioactive material in conjunction with uranium or thorium milling, or byproduct material at sites formerly associated with such milling, is required by the provisions of 18.3 to include in a license application proposed specifications relating to milling operations and the disposition of tailings or wastes resulting from such milling activities. This appendix establishes technical, ownership, and long-term site surveillance criteria relating to the siting, operation, decontamination, decommissioning, and reclamation of mills and tailings or waste systems and sites at which such mills and systems are located.

As used in this appendix, the term “as low as is reasonably achievable” has the same meaning as in 1.2.2.

In many cases, flexibility is provided in the criteria to allow achieving an optimum tailings disposal program on a site-specific basis. However, in such cases the objectives, technical alternatives and concerns which must be taken into account in developing a tailings program are identified. As provided by the provisions of 18.3, applications for licenses must clearly demonstrate how the criteria have been addressed.

The specifications shall be developed considering the expected full capacity of tailings or waste systems and the lifetime of mill operations. Where later expansions of systems or operations may be likely (for example, where large quantities of ore now marginally uneconomical may be stockpiled), the amenability of the disposal system to accommodate increased capacities without degradation in long-term stability and other performance factors shall be evaluated.

Licensees or applicants may propose to the Department alternatives to meet the specific requirements in this Appendix. The alternative proposals may take into account local or regional conditions, including geology, topography, hydrology, and meteorology. The Department may find that the proposed alternatives meet the Department's requirements if the alternatives will achieve a level of stabilization and containment of the sites concerned and a level of protection for public health, safety, and the environment from radiological and nonradiological hazards associated with the site, which is equivalent to, to the extent practicable, or more stringent than the level which would be achieved by the requirements of this Appendix and the standards promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency in 40 CFR Part 192, Subparts D and E. Proposed alternatives to specific regulations in this Part 18 require notice and opportunity for hearing before the NRC.

All site-specific licensing decisions based on the criteria in this Appendix or alternatives proposed by licensees or applicants will take into account the risk to the public health and safety and the environment with due consideration to the economic costs involved and any other factors the Department determines to be appropriate. In implementing this Appendix, the Department will consider “practicable” and “reasonably achievable” as equivalent terms. Decisions involving these terms will take into account the state of technology and the economics of improvements in relation to benefits to the public health and safety, and other societal and socioeconomic considerations, and in relation to the utilization of atomic energy in the public interest.

Criterion 1.

Criterion 1A. The general goal or broad objective in siting and design decisions is permanent isolation of tailings and associated contaminants by minimizing disturbance and dispersion by natural forces, and to do so without ongoing maintenance. For practical reasons, specific siting decisions and design standards must involve finite times (e.g., the longevity design standard in Criterion 6). The following site features which will contribute to such a goal or objective must be considered in selecting among alternative tailings disposal sites or judging the adequacy of existing tailings sites: