



NRC NEWS

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NRC SCHEDULES WASHINGTON, D.C. WORKSHOP ON FUEL FACILITY OVERSIGHT PROGRAM

The NRC has scheduled a workshop May 24-25 in Washington, D.C., to obtain suggestions from the public on revising the agency's oversight program for nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

This workshop is one of several to be held over a period of two years to factor public and other stakeholder comments into the revised fuel facility oversight program. At last month's meeting, cornerstones for meeting the NRC safety and national security missions were discussed.

This month's workshop will focus on:

- A proposed communication plan for informing and obtaining views of stakeholders about revision of the oversight program;
- The objective and scope of safety and national security-related cornerstones for meeting the NRC's mission;
- Key performance attributes for achieving each cornerstone;
- Licensee performance attributes the NRC needs to monitor and risk-inform inspections to ensure cornerstone objectives are met;
- Criteria for selection of performance indicators;
- Measurable parameters and methods for performance indicators; and
- Thresholds for performance.

The goals of the new initiative are to focus oversight on activities where the potential risks are greatest, obtain more objective indicators of risk-related performance, increase public confidence in the NRC's oversight program, and increase regulatory effectiveness, efficiency and realism. This initiative will employ lessons learned from the recently revised commercial nuclear reactor oversight program.

The nuclear fuel cycle begins with the milling of uranium ore to produce uranium concentrate called “yellowcake.” The yellowcake is converted into uranium hexafluoride gas at a special facility and loaded into cylinders. The cylinders are sent to a gaseous diffusion plant, where uranium is enriched for use as reactor fuel. The enriched uranium is then converted into oxide powder, fabricated into fuel pellets, loaded into fuel rods, and bundled into reactor fuel assemblies at a fuel fabrication facility. Assemblies are then transported to nuclear power plants, non-power research reactor facilities, and naval propulsion reactors for use as fuel.

The NRC currently inspects these fuel facilities several times a year in a variety of technical areas, such as chemical process safety, fire protection, nuclear criticality safety, radiation safety, and nuclear material safeguards. Results of these NRC inspections are available to the public.

The workshop, which is open to the public, will be held from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. both days at the Nuclear Energy Institute, located at 1776 I Street, N.W. (Republic Place). Visitor parking is limited; however, the building can be reached via the Red Line Metro to the Farragut North station.

Those who seek background information on this initiative may obtain transcripts of past meetings at www.nrc.gov/NMSS/FCSS/FCOB/INSP/REVISED/fcindex.htm on the NRC’s web site.

Interested persons can also access a related NRC paper, SECY 99-188, “Evaluation and Proposed Revision of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Safety Inspection Program,” from the agency’s web site, at www.nrc.gov/NRC/COMMISSION/SECYS/index.html or from the Public Document Room, telephone 202-634-3273.

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