



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES LICENSE TO INTERNATIONAL ISOTOPES FOR URANIUM DECONVERSION FACILITY IN NEW MEXICO

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a license to International Isotopes Fluorine Products (IIFP) Inc. to construct and operate a facility in Lea County, N.M., to extract fluorine from uranium hexafluoride left over from the uranium enrichment process.

The plant, which will be subject to NRC inspections during construction and operation, is the first major deconversion facility licensed by the NRC for the purpose of recovering fluoride products for commercial sale. Commercial uses for fluorine can include manufacturing electronics, solar panels and semiconductors.

Under the license IIFP can process about 8 million pounds per year of depleted uranium hexafluoride, or DUF6. The facility will “deconvert” the DUF6 by chemically extracting high purity fluoride compounds and anhydrous hydrogen fluoride. That process leaves behind depleted uranium oxide compounds that are more chemically stable than DUF6 and are generally suitable for disposal as low-level radioactive waste.

IIFP, a subsidiary of International Isotopes, Inc., submitted its application Dec. 30, 2009. The NRC staff completed thorough safety and environmental reviews of the proposed facility. In a May 2012 Safety Evaluation Report ([NUREG-2116](#)), the staff published its conclusion that IIFP’s proposed facility complies with NRC regulations, and would not pose an undue risk to the health and safety of workers or the public. The final environmental impact statement ([NUREG-2113](#)), published in August 2012, documents the NRC’s finding that there would be no environmental impacts that would prohibit the NRC from licensing the facility.

The IIFP application and more information about the facility are available on the [NRC website](#).

The NRC held public meetings near the plant site in July 2010 and February 2012 to exchange information with the public about the proposed facility and receive public comments as part of the NRC’s review of potential environmental impacts. The NRC offered an opportunity for members of the public to ask for a hearing on the license application but received no hearing requests. The NRC will hold a public meeting near the site to provide more information on the agency’s plans for overseeing facility construction and operations.

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