



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC RELEASES REVIEW OF DOE'S HANFORD WASTE TREATMENT PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has provided Congress and the Secretary of Energy its conclusion that the Department of Energy's regulatory processes for its Waste Treatment Plant at the Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington state, if properly implemented, are adequate to ensure public health and safety.

The conclusion is contained in a review delivered Aug. 6 to Congress and the Secretary of Energy and made public today on the NRC's Adams online document system at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> by entering access code ML081150883. Congress required NRC's review in the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2008. The review was conducted with the full cooperation of DOE.

NRC staff will hold a public meeting on Thursday, Aug. 28, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Hanford House Red Lion Inn, 802 George Washington Way, Richland, Wash. A public meeting was held Feb. 13 in Richland to discuss the scope of NRC's review.

The regulations and processes DOE has in place for the Waste Treatment Plant are, in most cases, similar to the NRC's. However, they differ in significant areas primarily because DOE is the owner/operator of the plant, not solely a regulator like the NRC. DOE essentially self-regulates the construction and operation of the plant by its contractors. DOE's regulatory process therefore covers areas not typically addressed by NRC regulations, such as general industrial safety. DOE also differs from NRC in that its safety-related decision making process does not provide for direct stakeholder involvement.

The report identifies several technical issues and offers suggestions for DOE in areas including transparency of its processes, radiation safety, and the focus of its allegations program. However, the report contains no specific recommendations for Congress and DOE.

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