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## NRC NEWS

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No. 09-052

March 18, 2009

### NRC DIRECTS STAFF TO INITIATE RULEMAKING ON DEPLETED URANIUM DISPOSAL

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The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has directed the agency staff to draft amendments to regulations regarding low-level radioactive waste to accommodate disposal of large amounts of depleted uranium.

In a Staff Requirements Memorandum issued March 18, the Commission accepted the staff's recommendation that the agency continue to consider depleted uranium as Class A low-level waste, but amend regulations in 10 CFR Part 61 to require a site-specific analysis for the disposal of large quantities of depleted uranium and the technical requirements for such an analysis. The Commission also directed the staff to develop a guidance document for public comment that outlines the parameters and assumptions to be used in conducting the site-specific analyses.

The Commission stressed that the rulemaking was not intended to change the current classification of depleted uranium as Class A waste. "Eventual changes to waste classification designations in the regulations must be analyzed in light of the total amount of depleted uranium being disposed of at any given site," the Commission said in its memorandum.

The Commission noted, however, that for "significant amounts of depleted uranium, there may be a need to place additional restrictions on the disposal of the depleted uranium at a specific site or deny such disposal based on unique site characteristics." Those restrictions would be identified through the site-specific analysis, it said.

The Commission also directed the staff to conduct a public workshop with "all potentially affected stakeholders" to discuss issues associated with the disposal of depleted uranium, the potential issues to be considered in rulemaking, and technical parameters of concern in the analysis so that informed decisions can be made in the interim period until the regulatory changes are final.

Depleted uranium is the byproduct, or tails, of the uranium enrichment process, a key point in the production of fuel for nuclear power reactors. The staff proposal ([SECY-08-147](#) ) fulfilled an earlier Commission directive in the adjudicatory proceeding regarding Louisiana Energy Services' application for a license to construct and operate a gas centrifuge enrichment plant in New Mexico. That license was granted in June 2006, and the plant is now under construction.

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Thursday, March 19, 2009