



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. 00-128

August 25, 2000

NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC WORKSHOP SEPTEMBER 5 ON HANDLING OF DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold the first of a series of public workshops September 5 in Rockville, Maryland, to review its handling of complaints by nuclear industry workers who allege they have been discriminated against by their employer after raising safety concerns.

The meeting in the agency's Two White Flint North Building Auditorium, at 11545 Rockville Pike, will start at 1:00 p.m. It will be open to public observation.

A second public workshop will be held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on September 7 at 7:00 p.m. at the NRC's Technical Training Center, Osborne Office Center, 5746 Marlin Road. A third public workshop will be held at 7:00 p.m. on September 14, in San Luis Obispo, California, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 333 Madonna Road. Details on subsequent workshops will be announced in the *Federal Register* and on the NRC's public meeting web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/PUBLIC/meet.html> and on the NRC's web site for the Office of Enforcement at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OE/>

The agency's procedures for handling discrimination allegations and complaints are described in various parts of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the NRC enforcement policy, and other agency guidelines. The overall objective of the employee protection regulations is to promote an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable raising safety concerns or engaging in other protected activity without fear of reprisal. Thus, an effective and consistent NRC approach for dealing with discrimination cases is an important feature of encouraging and ensuring a safety-conscious work environment.

The NRC has formed a Discrimination Task Group to review the way the agency handles discrimination complaints filed by nuclear industry workers and recommend possible changes to the agency's regulations, enforcement policy or other agency guidelines. The Task Group also will consider issues raised in a petition for rulemaking filed by the Union of Concerned Scientists filed in October 1999 asking the Commission to require NRC licensees to provide specific training to licensee management on implementing employee protection regulations.

The Task Group will host public workshops to help evaluate agency policies and to develop employee protection recommendations.

The Task Group includes NRC headquarters and regional employees. It plans to interact with other federal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the National Institute of Health, the Center for Disease Control, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Energy, to understand how these agencies handle discrimination issues.

Draft recommendations from the Task Group will be published the middle of next year for public comment.

Meetings will not be transcribed, but summaries of each workshop will be available from the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20555, telephone: 202/637-3273. The group's charter and other pertinent documents related to its activities will be periodically posted at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OE> on the agency's web site. Additional information about upcoming meetings can be obtained by calling Barry Westreich at (301) 415-3456 or via e-mail: BCW@nrc.gov.

##