



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DEVELOP PROPOSED REGULATION ON CONTROL OF SLIGHTLY RADIOACTIVE SOLID MATERIALS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is developing a proposed regulation on the control of slightly radioactive solid materials originating at licensed nuclear facilities using an expanded participatory approach.

The NRC staff will seek broad public participation and engage diverse viewpoints in the development of the regulation. It will consider a wide range of alternatives for the proposed rule, including the following: 1) continued use of the current approach to control the release of slightly contaminated solid material on a case-by-case basis; 2) recycling of slightly contaminated - but acceptably safe - solid materials, which could include recycle into consumer products; 3) release of material restricted to only certain uses or destinations, such as industrial uses or landfills, where the potential for public exposure is small; and 4) no release of such material for other uses, thus requiring permanent disposal.

Although the current approach protects public health and safety, NRC decisions on the release of slightly radioactive solid material, such as equipment, metals, concrete, soils, trash, and furniture, are made on a case-by-case basis. NRC is amending its regulations to provide clearer requirements using a rulemaking process which invites public comment and suggestions. Factors to be considered in the rulemaking will include 1) protection of public health and safety and the environment, 2) public confidence in the decision, and 3) the regulatory and economic impact on stakeholders. In this context, the Commission continues to favor the release of slightly contaminated solid materials, which do not pose significant health hazards, but is open to other viewpoints.

The NRC has already prepared several staff documents for public comment, held several public meetings, and sponsored a study by the National Academy of Science on alternatives for handling this contaminated material. As a result, there has been substantial information developed on the public health, confidence, and economic impacts of alternatives. This information can be found at NRC's web site at www.nrc.gov, under the Nuclear Materials page. The NRC staff plans to use information already gathered as a starting point to focus on potential solutions and to add to this information in areas where suggestions may be voiced. Any additional public workshops will, in particular, focus on such new areas including, for example, the feasibility of restricting use. The NRC staff will also explore the use of web-based methods for interacting with stakeholders. In addition, the staff will consider

information and data from related national and international studies and weigh the pros and cons of either implementing or endorsing the American National Standards Institute standard of one millirem (equal to an arm or leg X-ray) per year as the primary dose standard for clearance of contaminated material for further use.

The NRC anticipates issuing a final regulation on this subject within three years.

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