



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC SEEKS COMMENT, PLANS PUBLIC MEETINGS ON BLENDING OF LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking public comment on issues associated with blending of low-level radioactive waste and is planning public meetings to discuss blending in Rockville, Md.

The issue of blending low-level radioactive waste has received increased attention from the nuclear industry since the 2008 closing of the Barnwell, S.C., low-level waste disposal site. This action left waste generators in 36 states with no disposal options for Class B and Class C wastes, the two classes of low-level waste with higher radioactivity. Blending in some cases can lower the classification of the wastes to the lower-radioactivity Class A, which has available disposal capacity, by reducing the concentration of radionuclides.

Blending refers to mixing low-level wastes of different concentrations, primarily Class B or C with Class A. It does not involve mixing radioactive waste with non-radioactive waste, a practice known as "dilution." And it does not imply release of radioactive material to the general environment, either to municipal non-radioactive waste disposal sites or to consumer products. Blended wastes remain low-level waste and must be disposed in a licensed low-level waste disposal facility.

Blending is not prohibited or expressly addressed in NRC regulations. NRC staff guidance discourages blending in some circumstances, but also recognizes that blending – including blending that lowers the classification of a waste – may be appropriate in others.

NRC Chairman Gregory B. Jaczko directed the agency staff Oct. 8 to prepare a vote paper within six months for the Commission to consider issues related to blending of low-level radioactive wastes. Specific questions to be discussed at the upcoming public meeting are spelled out in a [Federal Register](#) notice published Nov. 30 seeking public comment.

A public meeting will be held Jan. 14 from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Legacy Hotel & Meeting Centre, 1775 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Md., to receive public comment on blending issues. In addition, NRC staff will meet separately with three companies that have expressed interest in blending in order to better understand their views. The staff will meet with Waste Control Specialists Dec. 14, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; with Studsvik the same day from 1:30

p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and with EnergySolutions on Dec. 15, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. These meetings will be held at NRC Headquarters, Two White Flint North, room T2B3. The public is welcome to attend. These industry meetings are intended to allow the NRC staff to better understand the views of these companies on blending and to allow more time at the Jan. 14 meeting for comments from interested members of the public.

Comments may be submitted in writing through Jan. 29 to Chief, Rulemaking and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mail Stop TWB 5B01M, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001; by fax to (301) 492-3446; or electronically at <http://www.regulations.gov> using docket ID NRC-2009-0520.

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NOTE: Anyone wishing to take photos or use a camera to record any portion of a NRC meeting should contact the Office of Public Affairs beforehand.

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