

Further information regarding this meeting can be obtained by contacting the Designated Federal Official between 7:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. (ET). Persons planning to attend this meeting are urged to contact the above named individual at least two working days prior to the meeting to be advised of any potential changes in the agenda.

Dated: February 12, 2003.

Sher Bahadur,

*Associate Director for Technical Support,
ACRS/ACNW.*

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Solicitation of Public Comments on Spent Fuel Transportation Package Performance Study Test Protocols

AGENCY: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

ACTION: Opening of comment period and public meeting announcement.

SUMMARY: This **Federal Register** notice announces the availability, for public comment, of the Test Protocols Report (draft NUREG-1768) for the NRC's spent nuclear fuel transportation Package Performance Study (PPS). The PPS is a confirmatory research program focused on the probabilities and consequences of severe transportation accidents—the very small fraction of accidents that could result in impact or thermal forces, on casks, that exceed NRC's standards for cask design. The PPS will use a combination of testing and analyses to develop data and validate methods of analysis for use in transportation risk assessments. A public participation process will continue as PPS proceeds, to ensure that stakeholder concerns are considered by the PPS and to support increased public confidence in NRC's regulatory activities, considering potential future increases in the number of spent fuel transports.

The test protocols report describes, at a conceptual level, full-scale spent fuel cask impact and fire physical testing that NRC may sponsor over the next couple of years. The "Executive Summary" of the test protocols report is included in this notice, and full copies of the report are available for comment at NRC's Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff> or may be obtained from the contact. Additional copies of the report and other PPS related documents can also be found at the Sandia Web site: <http://ttd.sandia.gov/nrc/modal.html>.

DATES: Written comments will be accepted until May 30, 2003. Comments received after this date and time will be considered if it is practical to do so, but the Commission is able to ensure consideration only for comments received before this date and time. As part of the public comments period, NRC will hold four (4) facilitated meetings: in Bethesda, Maryland, on March 6, 2003; in Las Vegas, Nevada, on March 12, 2003; in Pahrump, Nevada, on March 13, 2003; and in Rosemont, Illinois, on March 19, 2003. The meetings will be transcribed and transcripts will be made available from the Sandia Web site.

ADDRESSES: NRC recommends that comments be submitted by e-mail, but mail delivery is acceptable. Submit comments to Michael Lesar, Chief Rules and Directives Branch, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: T6-D-59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC, 20555-0001; or by internet electronic mail to nrcprep@nrc.gov. Comments may also be provided at the NRC Web site: <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/doc-comment/form.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Andrew J. Murphy about any questions on the material in the Test Protocols Report. He can be reached at the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mail Stop: T-10-D-20, Washington, DC 20555-0001; telephone 301-415-6011 or by internet electronic mail at ajm1@nrc.gov.

Any questions on participation in the public meetings should be directed to Mr. Francis X. Cameron; telephone 301-415-1642 or by internet electronic mail at fxc@nrc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The PPS began in 1999 with a scoping phase, consisting of a series of public meetings to identify stakeholder issues with transportation risk studies and identify potential areas of further research. The scoping phase of PPS culminated in 2000 with issuance of the PPS issues and resolution options report (hereafter Issues Report) for comment, and an associated series of public meetings. NRC has since reissued the Issues Report, together with summaries of the public meetings and written comments received, as NUREG/CR-6768. The Issues Report identified the lines of investigation for PPS: (1) Use recent accident statistics/data to reconstruct train and train accident event trees; (2) perform a high-speed impact test on a full-scale rail cask, to compare pre-test analyses with test results; (3) perform a long-duration fire test to compare pre-

test analyses with test results; and (4) perform experiments on fuel pellets, rods, and assemblies, to examine failure modes and fracturing properties, to support radioactive material release analyses.

The PPS Test Protocols Report is the first major PPS document since the Issues Report. The Test Protocols Report describes, at a conceptual level, the impact and fire tests that are currently planned for PPS, along with the goals for these tests. Several other PPS tasks, including the accident statistics/data work, historical accidents investigation, and uncertainty/sensitivity analyses for risk assessments, are planned as part of PPS, but they are not part of the Test Protocol, as it focuses on testing. Fuel tests are not discussed in the Test Protocols Report, because those tests are proceeding on a different schedule from the impact and fire tests being conducted under the PPS.

As mentioned, the Test Protocols describe PPS tests at a conceptual level. NRC believes it is prudent to obtain comments on the tests while at a conceptual level, because detailed planning and procurement for a specific series of tests will be a resource-intensive effort, and NRC recognizes that comments could change test approaches and plans. After comments on the Test Protocols have been collected and considered, NRC will modify PPS plans as necessary and direct development of detailed test plans and procedures for each of the PPS testing programs. The detailed plans, procedures, and tests will be made available.

Public Meetings

In addition to soliciting written public comment on the protocols, NRC will conduct public meetings to facilitate discussion and comment on the PPS Test Protocols. The meetings are planned as follows:

- **Workshop:** March 6, 2003, 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m., in the Auditorium at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Headquarters, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001;
- **Workshop:** March 12, 2003, 10 a.m.–7 p.m., at the Clark County Building Department, Russell/Cameron Office, 4701 West Russell Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89118;
- **Public Meeting/Seminar:** March 13, 2003, 6 p.m.–9 p.m., at the Mountain View Casino and Bowl, 1750 South Pahrump Valley Boulevard, Pahrump, Nevada 89048; and
- **Workshop:** March 19, 2003, 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m., at the Embassy Suites Hotel O'Hare, 5500 N. River Road, Rosemont, IL 60018.