

EPA reviews nuclear radiation limits; NRC reviews nuclear waste storage

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in the process of updating some of its nuclear energy regulations, including nuclear operation and waste storage standards.

On February 4, the EPA issued a request for public comment on its Environmental Radiation Protection Standards for Nuclear Power Operations. The standards have not been updated since their formation in 1977. Advancements in radiation dose, risk methods and detection tools, as well as improved nuclear technologies have led the EPA to revise the rules. The EPA is also considering re-examining surface and groundwater contamination protections for reactor sites. The standards are open for comment until June 4.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is in the process of revising its generic determination on the environmental impacts of the continued storage of spent nuclear fuel beyond a reactor's licensed life for operation and prior to ultimate disposal. The NRC has prepared a Waste Confidence Generic Environmental Impact Statement, which suggests that it is feasible to store spent nuclear fuel safely beyond the licensed life of operation of a reactor.

Advances in scientific understanding and technology combined with concern about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have renewed interest in nuclear power as a viable non-GHG-producing energy source.

Sources: E&E News; Environmental Protection Agency; Nuclear Regulatory Commission; Government Printing Office
