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NRC CREATES TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE TRITIUM ISSUE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission said today it has assembled a group of experts from its offices around the nation to examine the issue of inadvertent, unmonitored releases of radioactive liquids containing tritium from U.S. commercial nuclear power plants.

Agency leaders directed creation of the group earlier this year following reports of unmonitored releases of water containing tritium.

“The available information on these releases shows no hazard to the public,” said NRC Executive Director for Operations Luis Reyes. “Nonetheless, we need to conduct an in-depth review to see if the NRC needs to take additional action of a broad nature.”

At the same time the NRC decided to establish the tritium study group, they also decided to create a page on the NRC Web site to provide the public the latest available information on tritium issues. This information can be accessed at this address:

<http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/ops-experience/grndwtr-contam-tritium.html> .

Eleven of the 12 task force members come from the agency’s Offices of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards and Nuclear Regulatory Research, as well as from regional offices. The twelfth, a representative of state government, is being selected. The group will report to Bill Kane, the Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and Preparedness Programs, and is required to complete its review by Aug. 31. A written report summarizing the task force’s findings will be issued late this year.

The task force is required to address several topics, including:

- A general assessment of the potential public health impact from these releases;
- How the issue was communicated to the public, state and local officials, other federal agencies, Congress and other interested groups;
- A review of other inadvertent releases at nuclear power plants, including decommissioning sites, from 1996 to the present;
- Industry actions in response to the releases, including the timing of remediation efforts; and,
- NRC oversight of inadvertent releases, both under the Reactor Oversight Process (ROP) and the process in place prior to the ROP.

The task force can also consider issues not listed in its charter, and can identify issues for longer-term review by NRC staff.

The task force's charter is available on the NRC's Web site by entering ML060690186 at this address: <http://adamswebsearch.nrc.gov/dologin.htm> .

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