



Recommendation No. 62

July 28, 1998

Pilot Programs for Simulated Oversight of DOE facilities by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Background:

The Savannah River Site's Receiving Basin for Offsite Fuels (RBOF) has been chosen as one of three Department of Energy (DOE) facilities for a simulated oversight pilot program being conducted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). This pilot is intended to determine the feasibility of placing certain DOE facilities under NRC oversight.

Currently, DOE self-regulates its facilities. It is considering NRC oversight and RBOF is one of three pilots being conducted. RBOF provides safe receipt and interim storage of irradiated spent nuclear fuel elements from SRS reactors and domestic and foreign test research reactors. RBOF has been operating and receiving off-site fuels since 1964.

The pilot at SRS will take several months and should be completed near the end of 1998. During the pilot, the NRC will evaluate RBOF and its standards, requirements, procedures, practices and activities against standards the NRC believes would be appropriate to ensure safety in view of the nature of the work and hazards at the facility. The NRC will inspect each pilot facility to identify issues related to implementation of their possible oversight and will interact with DOE and its contractors throughout the pilot.

Recommendation:

The SRS CAB recommends that NRC regulation of DOE facilities be carefully addressed to weigh the benefits or possible disadvantages, thereof.

1. We acknowledge that such a change can potentially enhance the credibility of the DOE activities in the public's perception as well as the real or perceived safety of DOE operations.

2. We consider it highly likely that the involvement of a new layer of oversight will increase the cost of DOE activities and delay the decision-making process.
3. To date, the SRS CAB has heard little about the RBOF project or the status of two pilot projects conducted prior to RBOF. We suggest that the results of these projects may well bear on the RBOF decision.
4. The SRS CAB agrees with the concept of using pilot projects as part of the decision-making process. RBOF, which is not the most complex facility, is probably a good choice for a pilot program.

The SRS CAB looks forward to receiving a full report on the results of the pilot programs, including a cost/benefit evaluation and strategies on reducing management, administrative and overhead barriers. We expect that CAB and public support of the oversight concept will strongly depend on timely efforts by DOE and NRC to provide details of the current program.

Agency Responses

[Department of Energy-SR](#)