



NRC NEWS

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NRC APPROVES PILOT PROGRAM FOR CO-60 PRODUCTION AT HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has approved a license amendment request from PSEG Nuclear for a pilot program to explore the production of Cobalt-60 at the Hope Creek Generating Station, located about 18 miles southeast of Wilmington, Del.

The amended Hope Creek license gives PSEG permission to generate and transfer Cobalt-60 under the NRC's regulations for "byproduct" material. Cobalt-60, as a radioactive material licensed by the NRC and Agreement States, is used in applications such as cancer treatment and sterilization of foods and medical devices.

The amended license allows PSEG to alter the reactor's core by inserting up to 12 modified fuel assemblies containing rods filled with Cobalt-59, which would absorb neutrons during reactor operation and become Cobalt-60. PSEG's pilot program will gather data to verify that the modified fuel assemblies perform satisfactorily in service prior to use on a production basis. PSEG plans to insert the modified assemblies during Hope Creek's planned fall 2010 refueling outage.

The NRC staff approved the amendment after evaluating the potential effects of the modified fuel assemblies on plant operation and accident scenarios. The staff concluded the modified core will continue to meet the agency's safety requirements.

The agency issued a *Federal Register* notice on March 2 (http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a100302c.html), offering an opportunity to comment or request a hearing on the license amendment request. No hearing requests were submitted, but members of the public offered several comments that the staff addressed in the amendment's safety evaluation. The public version of the safety evaluation will be available on the NRC's website by entering ML102710156 in the search engine for the agency's electronic document database here: <http://adamspublic.nrc.gov/fnopenclient/>.

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