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## **NFS addresses residents' concerns over chemical**

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**ERWIN — Residents on Thursday peppered the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with questions about the potential dangers associated with a chemical Nuclear Fuel Services wants to process.**

**NFS has asked for an amendment to its license so that it can process uranium hexafluoride in a new commercial development line. The UF6 would be transformed to either a uranium oxide form or uranyl nitrate solution that subsequently would be purified and converted to low-enriched uranium.**

**NFS has said the final product would be shipped to nuclear power plants. Company spokesman Tony Treadway said in January that the high-enriched uranium would not be kept at the Erwin plan for longterm storage.**

**The NRC is reviewing the request.**

**At a meeting to discuss NFS' latest license performance review, one resident asked about the biggest risk the public would face if there was an accident from the program NFS wants to enact.**

**Pete Habighorst, fuel manufacturing branch chief for the NRC, said NFS would have to put into place a safety program with controls to prevent this from occurring. That has been included in NFS' integrated safety analysis, which the NRC has reviewed.**

**Representatives from the NRC said there are other facilities that handle this chemical in greater volumes than what NFS has proposed.**

**"Could there be a big explosion that would affect the community around NFS?" the resident asked.**

**"No," said Manuel Crepo, senior fuel facility inspector for the NRC. "The quantities they're dealing with here are so small you would be lucky if it were to get outside the building. The chances of it getting it out are near impossible. There's not enough material for it to possibly escape."**

**Joe Shay, director of the NRC Fuel Facility Inspection Division in Atlanta, who conducted the meeting, said there is an extensive process, including heat and becoming a vapor form, that is required for the chemical to be released to the public.**

**"The likelihood that it would rupture one of these small containers of roughly the size (NFS proposes), the likelihood of it getting outside the facility, much less (exiting) the premises is very low," he said.**

**Mike Weber, director of NRC's Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards Office in Washington, said this was an issue that the federal agency examined when it went inside the plant. He said the NRC will not grant the amendment unless it is convinced it will be operated "safely and securely." He said the NRC saw these controls being designed into the new facility during the visit.**

**“At least what we’ve seen so far is very positive,” he said, noting that the federal agency would like to complete its review of the license request in the next few months.**