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Numbers grossly misrepresented according to NFS spokesperson

(Erwin, Tenn.) – An opponent of Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc. (NFS) did not confirm information found within a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) document before distributing a news release that grossly misrepresented information related to cancer risks involving NFS downblending operations. According to NFS spokesperson Tony Treadway, the misrepresentation could cause unwarranted fear among Unicoi County residents.

“Linda Modica has been unsuccessful in lawsuits against NFS and in filings with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission,” said Treadway. “Her latest tactic was to distribute a news release publishing misrepresented statistics from the U.S. Department of Energy. I believe that her actions were irresponsible and regrettable.” Modica incorrectly claimed in a news release on Sierra Club letterhead that, “one in 71 residents of Erwin, Tennessee will fall victim to a latent cancer and die as a result of NFS downblending operations.”

In the question and answer session following Thursday night’s U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Licensee Performance Review at the NFS Training Center in Erwin, questions arose from concerned members of the public, highlighted by a Sierra Club news release distributed by Modica. The release centered on the footnote within a table of an analysis conducted by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a part of the DOE.

Last week, NFS contacted the authors of the report to confirm that Modica had grossly misinterpreted a footnote to a statistical table within the report. The actual calculation by the authors of the report predict that additional downblending work could result in about 1 chance in 85 million of one additional person within a 50-mile radius of the NFS plant contracting a fatal cancer. NFS officials are seeking an official letter from the authors of

the report to clarify the statistic to provide an absolute and definitive resolution of the matter. NFS will share the content of that letter, once it is received, with the public.

“NFS regrets that Ms. Modica purposely promoted unwarranted fear among Unicoi County citizens by failing to verify the facts of the report, thus misrepresenting statistics which were designed to protect, not threaten, the public,” said Treadway. “We confirmed with the authors of the DOE report that Ms. Modica never contacted them regarding the footnote or what the calculation meant. Thus, I believe that in her zeal to attack NFS she has done a great disservice to the people of Unicoi County, NFS and its employees.”

The report was a supplement to an earlier analysis of DOE programs to reduce Cold War stockpiles of highly enriched uranium and included a risk analysis involving four nuclear facilities, including Y-12 in Oak Ridge, TN, Savannah River Site near Aiken, SC, BWXT of Lynchburg, VA and NFS in Erwin. The report was intended to assure that operations at each site posed no extraordinary risk to the public or to workers at the facilities. The report found there to be no significant risk at any of the facilities. It also noted that NFS employees experienced the lowest annual radiation exposures of any of the four facilities studied.

According to the authors of the report, the 1 in 71 annual risk of a latent cancer fatality means that there is 1 chance in 71 that one additional person in this 50-mile radius population of 1,287,973 would contract and die from a fatal cancer over their lifetime from additional NFS downblending operations. This is equivalent to an increase of 0.000000012 in the risk of a latent cancer fatality or about 1 chance in 85 million.

“It is important to note that there is no evidence that NFS has ever caused cancer in any member of the public. It is also important to recognize that such reports do not accurately represent what will occur, as is evident from the continued decrease in off-site dose from NFS operations during a period of increased material processing,” Treadway said.

NFS encourages any concerned person to contact the DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration's Office of Fissile Materials Disposition in Washington, DC to discuss any concerns they may have related to the report. The document is DOE/EIS-0240-SA1. The DOE's toll-free telephone number is 1-800-342-5363. Or, visit www.doe.gov.

Information on the past five years of NFS air and water emissions is available to the public at all times at NFSFacts.com. The 2007 evaluation of total radioactive dose to the public shows the dose to be 1/100th of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual limit for public exposure from NFS.