

WAC 246-252-030 Criteria related to disposition of uranium mill tailings or wastes. As used in this section, the term "by-product material" means the tailings or wastes produced by the extraction or concentration of uranium or thorium from any ore processed primarily for its source material content.

As required by WAC 246-235-110(6), each applicant for a license to possess and use source material in conjunction with uranium or thorium milling, or by-product material at sites formerly associated with such milling, is required to include in a license application proposed specifications relating to the milling operation and the disposition of tailings or waste resulting from such milling activities. This section establishes criteria relating to the siting, operation, decontamination, decommissioning, and reclamation of mills and tailings or waste systems and sites at which such mills and systems are located and site and by-product material ownership. Applications must clearly demonstrate how these criteria have been addressed. The specifications shall be developed considering the expected full capacity of tailings or waste systems and the lifetime of mill operations. Where later expansions of systems or operations may be likely, the amenability of the disposal system to accommodate increased capacities without degradation in long-term stability and other performance factors shall be evaluated.

Licenseses or applicants may propose alternatives to the specific requirements in these criteria. The alternative proposals may take into account local or regional conditions, including geology, topography, hydrology, and meteorology. The department may find that the proposed alternatives meet the department's requirements if the alternatives will achieve a level of stabilization and containment of the sites concerned, and a level of protection for public health, safety, and the environment from radiological and nonradiological hazards associated with the sites, which is equivalent to, to the extent practicable, or more stringent than the level which would be achieved by the requirements of the standards promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in 40 C.F.R. 192, Subparts D and E.

(1) Criterion 1 - In selecting among alternative tailings disposal sites or judging the adequacy of existing tailings sites, the following site features which would contribute to meeting the broad objective of permanent isolation of the tailings and associated contaminants from man and the environment for 1,000 years to the extent reasonably achievable, and in any case, for at least 200 years without ongoing active maintenance shall be considered:

- (a) Remoteness from populated areas;
- (b) Hydrogeologic and other environmental conditions conducive to continued immobilization and isolation of contaminants from groundwater sources; and
- (c) Potential for minimizing erosion, disturbance, and dispersion by natural forces over the long term.

The site selection process must be an optimization to the maximum extent reasonably achievable in terms of these features.

In the selection of disposal sites, primary emphasis shall be given to isolation of tailings or wastes, a matter having long-term impacts, as opposed to consideration only of short-term convenience or benefits, such as minimization of transportation or land acquisition costs. While isolation of tailings will be a function of both site characteristics and engineering design, overriding consideration shall be given to siting features given the long-term nature of the tailings hazards.

Tailings shall be disposed in a manner such that no active maintenance is required to preserve the condition of the site.

(2) Criterion 2 - To avoid proliferation of small waste disposal sites, by-product material from in-situ extraction operations, such as residues from solution evaporation or contaminated control processes, and wastes from small remote above ground extraction operations shall be disposed at existing large mill tailings disposal sites; unless, considering the nature of the wastes, such as their volume and specific activity and the costs and environmental impacts of transporting the wastes to a large disposal site, such off-site disposal is demonstrated to be impracticable or the advantage of on-site burial clearly outweighs the benefits of reducing the perpetual surveillance obligations.

(3) Criterion 3 - The "prime option" for disposal of tailings is placement below grade, either in mines or specially excavated pits (that is, where the need for any specially constructed retention structure is eliminated).

The evaluation of alternative sites and disposal methods performed by mill operators in support of their proposed tailings disposal program (provided in applicants' environmental reports) shall reflect serious consideration of this disposal mode. In some instances, below grade disposal may not be the most environmentally sound approach, such as might be the case if a groundwater formation is relatively close to the surface or not very well isolated by overlying soils and rock. Also, geologic and topographic conditions might make full, below grade burial impracticable; for example, near-surface bedrock could create prominent excavation costs while more suitable alternate sites may be available. Where full below grade burial is not practicable, the size of the retention structures, and the size and steepness of slopes of associated exposed embankments, shall be minimized by excavation to the maximum extent reasonably achievable or appropriate, given the geologic and hydrogeologic conditions at a site. In these cases, it must be demonstrated that an above-grade disposal program will provide reasonably equivalent isolation of the tailings from natural erosional forces.

(4) Criterion 4 - The following site and design criteria shall be adhered to whether tailings or wastes are disposed of above or below grade:

(a) Upstream rainfall catchment areas must be minimized to decrease erosion potential and the size of the probable maximum flood which could erode or wash out sections of the tailings disposal area.

(b) Topographic features shall provide good wind protection.

(c) Embankment and cover slopes shall be relatively flat after final stabilization to minimize erosion potential and to provide conservative factors of safety assuring long-term stability. The broad objective should be to contour final slopes to grades which are as close as possible to those which would be provided if tailings were disposed of below grade; this could, for example, lead to slopes of about 10 horizontal to one vertical (10h:1v) or less steep. In general, slopes should not be steeper than about 5h:1v. Where steeper slopes are proposed, reasons why a slope less steep than 5h:1v would be impracticable should be provided, and compensating factors and conditions which make such slopes acceptable should be identified.

(d) A fully self-sustaining vegetative cover shall be established or rock cover employed to reduce wind and water erosion to negligible levels.

Where a full vegetative cover is not likely to be self-sustaining due to climatic conditions, such as in semi-arid and arid regions, rock cover shall be employed on slopes of the impoundment system. The NRC will consider relaxing this requirement for extremely gentle slopes such as those which may exist on the top of the pile.

The following factors shall be considered in establishing the final rock cover design to avoid displacement of rock particles by human and animal traffic or by natural processes, and to preclude undercutting and piping:

(i) Shape, size, composition, gradation of rock particles (excepting bedding material, average particle size shall be at least cobble size or greater);

(ii) Rock cover thickness and zoning of particles by size; and

(iii) Steepness of underlying slopes.

(e) Individual rock fragments must be dense, sound, and resistant to abrasion, and free from defects that would tend to unduly increase their destruction by water and frost actions. Weak, friable, or laminated aggregate may not be used. Shale, rock laminated with shale, and cherts may not be used.

Rock covering of slopes may be unnecessary where top covers are very thick (on the order of 10 meters or greater); impoundment slopes are very gentle (on the order of 10h:1v or less); bulk cover materials have inherently favorable erosion resistance characteristics; and there is negligible drainage catchment area upstream of the pile, and good wind protection as described in (a) and (b) of this subsection (Criterion 4).

(f) Impoundment surfaces shall be contoured to avoid areas of concentrated surface runoff or abrupt or sharp changes in slope gradient. In addition to rock cover on slopes, areas toward which surface runoff might be directed shall be well protected with substantial rock cover (riprap). In addition to providing for stability of the impoundment systems itself, the overall stability, erosion potential, and geomorphology of surrounding terrain shall be evaluated to assure that there are no processes, such as gully erosion, which would lead to impoundment instability.

(g) The impoundment may not be located near a capable fault that could cause a maximum credible earthquake larger than that which the impoundment could reasonably be expected to withstand. As used in this criterion, the term "capable fault" has the same meaning as defined in Section III (g) of Appendix A of 10 C.F.R. Part 100. The term "maximum credible earthquake" means that earthquake which would cause the maximum vibratory ground motion based upon an evaluation of earthquake potential considering the regional and local geology and seismology and specific characteristics of local subsurface material.

(h) The impoundment, where feasible, should be designed to incorporate features which will promote deposition of suspended particles. For example, design features which promote deposition of sediment suspended in any runoff which flows into the impoundment area might be utilized; the object of such a design feature would be to enhance the thickness of cover over time.

(5) Criterion 5 - Criteria 5(a) through 5(g) and new Criterion 13 incorporate the basic groundwater protection standards imposed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in 40 C.F.R. Part 192, Subparts D and E (48 FR 45926; October 7, 1983) which apply during operations and prior to the end of closure. Groundwater monitoring to comply with these standards is required by Criterion 7.

(a) The primary groundwater protection standard is a design standard for surface impoundments used to manage uranium and thorium by-product material. Surface impoundments (except for an existing portion) must have a liner that is designed, constructed, and installed to prevent any migration of wastes out of the impoundment to the adjacent subsurface soil, groundwater, or surface water at any time during the active life (including the closure period) of the impoundment. The liner may be constructed of materials that may allow wastes to migrate into the liner (but not into the adjacent subsurface soil, groundwater, or surface water) during the active life of the facility, provided that impoundment closure includes removal or decontamination of all waste residues, contaminated containment system components (liners), contaminated subsoils, and structures and equipment contaminated with waste and leachate. For impoundments that will be closed with the liner material left in place, the liner must be constructed of materials that can prevent wastes from migrating into the liner during the active life of the facility.

(b) The liner required by (a) of this subsection must be:

(i) Constructed of materials that have appropriate chemical properties and sufficient strength and thickness to prevent failure due to pressure gradients (including static head and external hydrogeologic forces), physical contact with the waste or leachate to which they are exposed, climatic conditions, the stress of installation, and the stress of daily operation;

(ii) Placed upon a foundation or base capable of providing support to the liner and resistance to pressure gradients above and below the liner to prevent failure of the liner due to settlement, compression, or uplift; and

(iii) Installed to cover all surrounding earth likely to be in contact with the wastes or leachate.

(c) The applicant or licensee will be exempted from the requirements of (a) of this subsection if the department finds, based on a demonstration by the applicant or licensee, that alternate design and operating practices, including the closure plan, together with site characteristics will prevent the migration of any hazardous constituents into groundwater or surface water at any future time. In deciding whether to grant an exemption, the department will consider:

(i) The nature and quantity of the wastes;

(ii) The proposed alternate design and operation;

(iii) The hydrogeologic setting of the facility, including the attenuation capacity and thickness of the liners and soils present between the impoundment and groundwater or surface water; and

(iv) All other factors which would influence the quality and mobility of the leachate produced and the potential for it to migrate to groundwater or surface water.

(d) A surface impoundment must be designed, constructed, maintained, and operated to prevent overtopping resulting from normal or abnormal operations; overfilling; wind and wave actions; rainfall; run-on; from malfunctions of level controllers, alarms, and other equipment; and human error.

(e) When dikes are used to form the surface impoundment, the dikes must be designed, constructed, and maintained with sufficient structural integrity to prevent massive failure of the dikes. In ensuring structural integrity, it must not be presumed that the liner system will function without leakage during the active life of the impoundment.

(f) Uranium and thorium by-product materials must be managed to conform to the following secondary groundwater protection standard: Hazardous constituents entering the groundwater from a licensed site must not exceed the specified concentration limits in the uppermost aquifer beyond the point of compliance during the compliance period. Hazardous constituents are those constituents identified by the department pursuant to (g) of this subsection. Specified concentration limits are those limits established by the department as indicated in (j) of this subsection. The department will also establish the point of compliance and compliance period on a site specific basis through license conditions and orders. The objective in selecting the point of compliance is to provide the earliest practicable warning that the impoundment is releasing hazardous constituents to the groundwater. The point of compliance must be selected to provide prompt indication of groundwater contamination on the hydraulically downgradient edge of the disposal area. The department must identify hazardous constituents, establish concentration limits, set the compliance period, and adjust the point of compliance, if needed, when the detection monitoring established under criterion 7 indicates leakage of hazardous constituents from the disposal area.

(g) A constituent becomes a hazardous constituent subject to (j) of this subsection when the constituent:

(i) Is reasonably expected to be in or derived from the by-product material in the disposal area;

(ii) Has been detected in the groundwater in the uppermost aquifer; and

(iii) Is listed in WAC 246-252-050 Appendix A.

(h) The department may exclude a detected constituent from the set of hazardous constituents on a site specific basis if it finds that the constituent is not capable of posing a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment. In deciding whether to exclude constituents, the department will consider the following:

(i) Potential adverse effect on groundwater quality, considering:

(A) The physical and chemical characteristics of the waste in the licensed site, including its potential for migration;

(B) The hydrogeological characteristics of the facility and surrounding land;

(C) The quantity of groundwater and the direction of groundwater flow;

(D) The proximity and withdrawal rates of groundwater users;

(E) The current and future uses of groundwater in the area;

(F) The existing quality of groundwater, including other sources of contamination and their cumulative impact on the groundwater quality;

(G) The potential for health risks caused by human exposure to waste constituents;

(H) The potential damage to wildlife, crops, vegetation, and physical structures caused by exposure to waste constituents;

(I) The persistence and permanence of the potential adverse effects.

(ii) Potential adverse effects on hydraulically connected surface water quality, considering:

(A) The volume and physical and chemical characteristics of the waste in the licensed site;

(B) The hydrogeological characteristics of the facility and surrounding land;

- (C) The quantity and quality of groundwater, and the direction of groundwater flow;
- (D) The patterns of rainfall in the region;
- (E) The proximity of the licensed site to surface waters;
- (F) The current and future uses of surface waters in the area and any water quality standards established for those surface waters;
- (G) The existing quality of surface water, including other sources of contamination and the cumulative impact on surface water quality;
- (H) The potential for health risks caused by human exposure to waste constituents;
- (I) The potential damage to wildlife, crops, vegetation, and physical structures caused by exposure to waste constituents; and
- (J) The persistence and permanence of the potential adverse effects.
 - (i) In making any determinations under (h) and (k) of this subsection about the use of groundwater in the area around the facility, the department will consider any identification of underground sources of drinking water and exempted aquifers made by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.
 - (j) At the point of compliance, the concentration of a hazardous constituent must not exceed:
 - (i) The department approved background concentration of that constituent in the groundwater;
 - (ii) The respective value given in the table in subsection (5)(1) of this section if the constituent is listed in the table and if the background level of the constituent is below the value listed; or
 - (iii) An alternate concentration limit established by the department.
 - (k) Conceptually, background concentrations pose no incremental hazards and the drinking water limits in (j)(i) of this subsection state acceptable hazards but these two options may not be practically achievable at a specific site. Alternate concentration limits that present no significant hazard may be proposed by licensees for department consideration. Licensees must provide the basis for any proposed limits including consideration of practicable corrective actions, that limits are as low as reasonably achievable, and information on the factors the department must consider.

The department will establish a site specific alternate concentration limit for a hazardous constituent as provided in (j) of this subsection if it finds that the constituent will not pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment as long as the alternate concentration limit is not exceeded. In establishing alternate concentration limits, the department will apply its as low as reasonably achievable criterion in this chapter. The department will also consider the following factors:

 - (i) Potential adverse effects on groundwater quality, considering:
 - (A) The physical and chemical characteristics of the waste in the licensed site including its potential for migration;
 - (B) The hydrogeological characteristics of the facility and surrounding land;
 - (C) The quantity of groundwater and the direction of groundwater flow;
 - (D) The proximity and withdrawal rates of groundwater users;
 - (E) The current and future uses of groundwater in the area;

(F) The existing quality of groundwater, including other sources of contamination and their cumulative impact on the groundwater quality;

(G) The potential for health risks caused by human exposure to waste constituents;

(H) The potential damage to wildlife, crops, vegetation, and physical structures caused by exposure to waste constituents;

(I) The persistence and permanence of the potential adverse effects.

(ii) Potential adverse effects on hydraulically connected surface water quality, considering:

(A) The volume and physical and chemical characteristics of the waste in the licensed site;

(B) The hydrogeological characteristics of the facility and surrounding land;

(C) The quantity and quality of groundwater, and the direction of groundwater flow;

(D) The patterns of rainfall in the region;

(E) The proximity of the licensed site to surface waters;

(F) The current and future uses of surface waters in the area and any water quality standards established for those surface waters;

(G) The existing quality of surface water including other sources of contamination and the cumulative impact on surface water quality;

(H) The potential for health risks caused by human exposure to waste constituents;

(I) The potential damage to wildlife, crops, vegetation, and physical structures caused by exposure to waste constituents; and

(J) The persistence and permanence of the potential adverse effects.

(1) MAXIMUM VALUES FOR GROUNDWATER PROTECTION:

Constituent or Property	Maximum Concentration
	Milligrams per liter
Arsenic	0.05
Barium	1.0
Cadmium	0.01
Chromium	0.05
Lead	0.05
Mercury	0.002
Selenium	0.01
Silver	0.05
Endrin (1,2,3,4,10,10-hexachloro-1,7 -exoxy-1,4,4a,5,6,7,8,9a-octahydro-1, 4-endo-5,8-dimethano naphthalene)	0.0002
Lindane (1,2,3,4,5,6-hexachlorocyclohexane, gamma isomer)	0.004
Methoxychlor (1,1,1-Trichloro-2,2-bis(p-methoxyphenylethane)	0.1
Toxaphene (C ₁₀ H ₁₀ Cl ₆ , Technical chlorinated camphene, 67-69 percent chlorine)	0.005
2,4-D (2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid)	0.1
2,4,5-TP Silvex (2,4,5-Trichlorophenoxypropionic acid)	0.01
	Picocuries per liter
Combined radium - 226 and radium - 228	5
Gross alpha - particle activity (excluding	

Constituent or Property	Maximum Concentration
	Milligrams per liter
radon and uranium when producing uranium by-product material or thorium when producing thorium by-product material)	15

(m) If the groundwater protection standards established under (f) of this subsection are exceeded at a licensed site, a corrective action program must be put into operation as soon as is practicable, and in no event later than 18 months after the department finds that the standards have been exceeded. The licensee shall submit the proposed corrective action program and supporting rationale for department approval prior to putting the program into operation, unless otherwise directed by the department. The objective of the program is to return hazardous constituent concentration levels in groundwater to the concentration limits set as standards. The licensee's proposed program must address removing the hazardous constituents that have entered the groundwater at the point of compliance or treating them in place. The program must also address removing or treating in place any hazardous constituents that exceed concentration limits in groundwater between the point of compliance and the downgradient facility property boundary. The licensee shall continue corrective action measures to the extent necessary to achieve and maintain compliance with the groundwater protection standard. The department will determine when the licensee may terminate corrective action measures based on data from the groundwater monitoring program and other information that provide reasonable assurance that the groundwater protection standard will not be exceeded.

(n) In developing and conducting groundwater protection programs, applicants and licensees shall also consider the following:

(i) Installation of bottom liners (where synthetic liners are used, a leakage detection system must be installed immediately below the liner to ensure major failures are detected if they occur. This is in addition to the groundwater monitoring program conducted as provided in Criterion 7. Where clay liners are proposed or relatively thin, in-situ clay soils are to be relied upon for seepage control, tests must be conducted with representative tailings solutions and clay materials to confirm that no significant deterioration of permeability or stability properties will occur with continuous exposure of clay to tailings solutions. Tests must be run for a sufficient period of time to reveal any effects if they are going to occur (in some cases deterioration has been observed to occur rather rapidly after about nine months of exposure)).

(ii) Mill process designs which provide the maximum practicable recycle of solutions and conservation of water to reduce the net input of liquid to the tailings impoundment.

(iii) Dewatering of tailings by process devices or in-situ drainage systems (at new sites, tailings must be dewatered by a drainage system installed at the bottom of the impoundment to lower the phreatic surface and reduce the driving head of seepage, unless tests show tailings are not amenable to such a system. Where in-situ dewatering is to be conducted, the impoundment bottom must be graded to assure that the drains are at a low point. The drains must be protected by suitable filter materials to assure that drains remain free running. The drainage system must also be adequately sized to assure good drainage).

(iv) Neutralization to promote immobilization of hazardous constituents.

(o) Where groundwater impacts are occurring at an existing site due to seepage, action must be taken to alleviate conditions that lead to excessive seepage impacts and restore groundwater quality. The specific seepage control and groundwater protection method, or combination of methods, to be used must be worked out on a site-specific basis. Technical specifications must be prepared to control installation of seepage control systems. A quality assurance, testing, and inspection program, which includes supervision by a qualified engineer or scientist, must be established to assure the specifications are met.

(p) In support of a tailings disposal system proposal, the applicant/operator shall supply information concerning the following:

(i) The chemical and radioactive characteristics of the waste solutions.

(ii) The characteristics of the underlying soil and geologic formations particularly as they will control transport of contaminants and solutions. This includes detailed information concerning extent, thickness, uniformity, shape, and orientation of underlying strata. Hydraulic gradients and conductivities of the various formations must be determined. This information must be gathered from borings and field survey methods taken within the proposed impoundment area and in surrounding areas where contaminants might migrate to groundwater. The information gathered on boreholes must include both geologic and geophysical logs in sufficient number and degree of sophistication to allow determining significant discontinuities, fractures, and channeled deposits of high hydraulic conductivity. If field survey methods are used, they should be in addition to and calibrated with borehole logging. Hydrologic parameters such as permeability may not be determined on the basis of laboratory analysis of samples alone; a sufficient amount of field testing (e.g., pump tests) must be conducted to assure actual field properties are adequately understood. Testing must be conducted to allow estimating chemi-sorption attenuation properties of underlying soil and rock.

(iii) Location, extent, quality, capacity and current uses of any groundwater at and near the site.

(q) Steps must be taken during stockpiling of ore to minimize penetration of radionuclides into underlying soils; suitable methods include lining or compaction of ore storage areas.

(6) Criterion 6 - (a) In disposing of waste by-product material, licensees shall place an earthen cover (or approved alternative) over tailings or wastes at the end of milling operations and shall close the waste disposal area in accordance with a design¹ which provides reasonable assurance of control of radiological hazards to:

(i) Be effective for 1,000 years, to the extent reasonably achievable, and, in any case, for at least 200 years; and

(ii) Limit releases of Radon-222 from uranium by-product materials, and Radon-220 from thorium by-product materials, to the atmosphere so as not to exceed an average² release rate of 20 picocuries per square meter per second (pCi/m²s) to the extent practicable throughout the effective design life determined pursuant to (a)(i) of this subsection (this criterion). In computing required tailings cover thicknesses, moisture in soils in excess of amounts found normally in similar soils in similar circumstances may not be considered. Direct gamma exposure from the tailings or wastes should be reduced to background levels. The effects of any thin synthetic layer may not be tak-

en into account in determining the calculated radon exhalation level. If nonsoil materials are proposed as cover materials, it must be demonstrated that these materials will not crack or degrade by differential settlement, weathering, or other mechanism, over long-term intervals.

(b) As soon as reasonably achievable after emplacement of the final cover to limit releases of Radon-222 from uranium by-product material and prior to placement of erosion protection barriers or other features necessary for long-term control of the tailings, the licensee shall verify through appropriate testing and analysis that the design and construction of the final radon barrier is effective in limiting releases of Radon-222 to a level not exceeding 20 pCi/m²s averaged over the entire pile or impoundment using the procedures described in 40 C.F.R. part 61, appendix B, Method 115, or another method of verification approved by NRC as being at least as effective in demonstrating the effectiveness of the final radon barrier.

(c) When phased emplacement of the final radon barrier is included in the applicable reclamation plan, the verification of Radon-222 release rates required in (b) of this subsection (this criterion) must be conducted for each portion of the pile or impoundment as the final radon barrier for that portion is emplaced.

(d) Within 90 days of the completion of all testing and analysis relevant to the required verification in (b) and (c) of this subsection (this criterion), the uranium mill licensee shall report to the department the results detailing the actions taken to verify that levels of release of Radon-222 do not exceed 20 pCi/m²s when averaged over the entire pile or impoundment. The licensee shall maintain records until termination of the license documenting the source of input parameters including the results of all measurements on which they are based, the calculations or analytical methods used to derive values for input parameters, and the procedure used to determine compliance. These records shall be kept in a form suitable for transfer to the custodial agency at the time of transfer of the site to DOE or a state for long-term care if requested.

(e) Near surface cover materials (i.e., within the top three meters) may not include waste or rock that contains elevated levels of radium; soils used for near surface cover must be essentially the same, as far as radioactivity is concerned, as that of surrounding surface soils. This is to ensure that surface radon exhalation is not significantly above background because of the cover material itself.

(f) The design requirements in this criterion for longevity and control of radon releases apply to any portion of a licensed or disposal site unless such portion contains a concentration of radium in land, averaged over areas of 100 square meters, which, as a result of by-product material, does not exceed the background level by more than:

(i) 5 picocuries per gram (pCi/g) of radium-226, or, in the case of thorium by-product material, radium-228, averaged over the first 15 centimeters (cm) below the surface; and

(ii) 15 pCi/g of radium-226, or, in the case of thorium by-product material, radium-228, averaged over 15-cm thick layers more than 15 cm below the surface.

(g) By-product material containing concentrations of radionuclides other than radium in soil, and surface activity on remaining structures, must not result in a total effective dose equivalent (TEDE) exceeding the dose from cleanup of radium contaminated soil to

the standard (benchmark dose) contained in (f) of this subsection, and must be at levels which are as low as is reasonably achievable (ALARA). If more than one residual radionuclide is present in the same 100 square meter area, the sum of the ratios for each radionuclide of concentration present to the concentration limit will not exceed "1" (unity). A calculation of the potential peak annual TEDE within 1000 years to the average member of the critical group that would result from applying the radium standard, not including radon, on the site must be submitted for approval. The use of decommissioning plans with benchmark doses which exceed 100 mrem/yr, before application of ALARA, requires the approval of the department. This requirement for dose criteria does not apply to sites that have decommissioning plans for soil and structures approved before June 11, 1999.

(h) The licensee shall also address the nonradiological hazards associated with the wastes in planning and implementing closure. The licensee shall ensure that disposal areas are closed in a manner that minimizes the need for further maintenance. To the extent necessary to prevent threats to human health and the environment, the licensee shall control, minimize, or eliminate post-closure escape of nonradiological hazardous constituents, leachate, contaminated rainwater, or waste decomposition products to the ground or surface waters or to the atmosphere.

- 1 In the case of thorium by-product materials, the standard applies only to design. Monitoring for radon emissions from thorium by-product materials after installation of an appropriately designed cover is not required.
- 2 This average applies to the entire surface of each disposal area over a period of at least one year, but a period short compared to 100 years. Radon will come from both by-product materials and from covering materials. Radon emissions from covering materials should be estimated as part of developing a closure plan for each site. The standard, however, applies only to emissions from by-product materials to the atmosphere.

Criterion 6A - (a) For impoundments containing uranium by-product materials, the final radon barrier must be completed as expeditiously as practicable considering technological feasibility after the pile or impoundment ceases operation in accordance with a written, department-approved reclamation plan. (The term as expeditiously as practicable considering technological feasibility as specifically defined in WAC 246-252-010 includes factors beyond the control of the licensee.) Deadlines for completion of the final radon barrier and, if applicable, the following interim milestones must be established as a condition of the individual license: Windblown tailings retrieval and placement on the pile and interim stabilization (including dewatering or the removal of freestanding liquids and recontouring). The placement of erosion protection barriers or other features necessary for long-term control of the tailings must also be completed in a timely manner in accordance with a written, approved reclamation plan.

(b) The department may approve a licensee's request to extend the time for performance of milestones related to emplacement of the final radon barrier if, after providing an opportunity for public participation, the department finds that the licensee has adequately demonstrated in the manner required in subsection (6)(b) of this section (Criterion 6) that releases of Radon-222 do not exceed an average of 20 pCi/m²s. If the delay is approved on the basis that the radon releases do not exceed 20 pCi/m²s, a verification of radon levels, as required by subsection (6)(b) of this section (Criterion 6), must be made annually during the period of delay. In addition, once the department has established the date in the reclamation plan for the milestone for completion of the final radon barrier, the department may extend that date based on cost if, after providing an opportunity for public participation, the department finds that the licensee is making good

faith efforts to emplace the final radon barrier, the delay is consistent with the definitions of available technology, and the radon releases caused by the delay will not result in a significant incremental risk to the public health.

(c) The department may authorize by license amendment, upon licensee request, a portion of the impoundment to accept uranium by-product material or such materials that are similar in physical, chemical, and radiological characteristics to the uranium mill tailings and associated wastes already in the pile or impoundment from other sources, during the closure process. No such authorization will be made if it results in a delay or impediment to emplacement of the final radon barrier over the remainder of the impoundment in a manner that will achieve levels of Radon-222 releases not exceeding 20 pCi/m²s averaged over the entire impoundment. The verification required in subsection (6)(b) of this section (Criterion 6) may be completed with a portion of the impoundment being used for further disposal if the department makes a final finding that the impoundment will continue to achieve a level of Radon-222 releases not exceeding 20 pCi/m²s averaged over the entire impoundment. In this case, after the final radon barrier is complete except for the continuing disposal area:

- (i) Only by-product material will be authorized for disposal;
- (ii) The disposal will be limited to the specified existing disposal area; and
- (iii) This authorization will only be made after providing opportunity for public participation.

Reclamation of the disposal area, as appropriate, must be completed in a timely manner after disposal operations cease in accordance with subsection (6)(a) of this section (Criterion 6); however, these actions are not required to be complete as part of meeting the deadline for final radon barrier construction.

(7) Criterion 7 - At least one full year prior to any major site construction, a preoperational monitoring program must be conducted to provide complete baseline data on a milling site and its environs. Throughout the construction and operating phases of the mill, an operational monitoring program must be conducted to complete the following:

- (a) To measure or evaluate compliance with applicable standards and regulations;
- (b) To evaluate performance of control systems and procedures;
- (c) To evaluate environmental impacts of operation; and
- (d) To detect potential long-term effects.

The licensee shall establish a detection monitoring program needed for the department to set the site-specific groundwater protection standards in Criterion 5 of this section. For all monitoring under this paragraph, the licensee or applicant will propose for department approval as license conditions, which constituents are to be monitored on a site-specific basis. A detection monitoring program has two purposes. The initial purpose of the program is to detect leakage of hazardous constituents from the disposal area so that the need to set groundwater protection standards is monitored. If leakage is detected, the second purpose of the program is to generate data and information needed for the department to establish the standards under Criterion 5. The data and information must provide a sufficient basis to identify those hazardous constituents which require concentration limit standards and to enable the department to set the limits for those

constituents and the compliance period. They may also need to provide the basis for adjustments to the point of compliance. For licenses in effect September 30, 1983, the detection monitoring programs must have been in place by October 1, 1984. For licenses issued after September 30, 1983, the detection monitoring programs must be in place when specified by the department in orders or license conditions. Once groundwater protection standards have been established pursuant to Criterion 5, the licensee shall establish and implement a compliance monitoring program. The purpose of the compliance monitoring program is to determine that the hazardous constituent concentrations in groundwater continue to comply with the standards set by the department. In conjunction with a corrective action program, the licensee shall establish and implement a corrective action monitoring program. The purpose of the corrective action monitoring program is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the corrective actions. Any monitoring program required by this paragraph may be based on existing monitoring programs to the extent the existing programs can meet the stated objective for the program.

(8) Criterion 8 - Milling operations shall be conducted so that all airborne effluent releases are reduced to as low as is reasonably achievable. The primary means of accomplishing this shall be by means of emission controls. Institutional controls, such as extending the site boundary and exclusion area, may be employed to ensure that off-site exposure limits are met, but only after all practicable measures have been taken to control emissions at the source. Notwithstanding the existence of individual dose standards, strict control of emissions is necessary to assure that population exposures are reduced to the maximum extent reasonably achievable and to avoid site contamination. The greatest potential sources of off-site radiation exposure (aside from radon exposure) are dusting from dry surfaces of the tailings disposal area not covered by tailings solution and emissions from yellowcake drying and packaging operations. During operations and prior to closure, radiation doses from radon emissions from surface impoundments shall be kept as low as is reasonably achievable. Checks shall be made and logged hourly of all parameters (e.g., differential pressure and scrubber water flow rate) which determine the efficiency of yellowcake stack emission control equipment operation. It shall be determined whether or not conditions are within a range prescribed to ensure that the equipment is operating consistently near peak efficiency; corrective action shall be taken when performance is outside of prescribed ranges. Effluent control devices shall be operative at all times during drying and packaging operations and whenever air is exhausting from the yellowcake stack.

Drying and packaging operations shall terminate when controls are inoperative. When checks indicate the equipment is not operating within the range prescribed for peak efficiency, actions shall be taken to restore parameters to the prescribed range. When this cannot be done without shutdown and repairs, drying and packaging operations shall cease as soon as practicable.

Operations may not be restarted after cessation due to off-normal performance until needed corrective actions have been identified and implemented. All such cessations, corrective actions, and restarts shall be reported to the department in writing, within 10 days of the subsequent restart.

To control dusting from tailings, that portion not covered by standing liquids shall be wetted or chemically stabilized to prevent or minimize blowing and dusting to the maximum extent reasonably ach-

ievable. This requirement may be relaxed if tailings are effectively sheltered from wind, such as may be the case where they are disposed of below grade and the tailings surface is not exposed to wind. Consideration shall be given in planning tailings disposal programs to methods which would allow phased covering and reclamation of tailings impoundments since this will help in controlling particulate and radon emissions during operation. To control dustings from diffuse sources, such as tailings and ore pads where automatic controls do not apply, operators shall develop written operating procedures specifying the methods of control which will be utilized.

Milling operations producing or involving thorium by-product material shall be conducted in such a manner as to provide reasonable assurance that the annual dose equivalent does not exceed 25 millirems to the whole body, 75 millirems to the thyroid, and 25 millirems to any other organ of any member of the public as a result of exposures to the planned discharge of radioactive materials, Radon-220 and its daughters excepted, to the general environment.

Uranium and thorium by-product materials shall be managed so as to conform to the applicable provisions of Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 440, Ore Mining and Dressing Point Source Category: Effluent Limitations Guidelines and New Source Performance Standards, Subpart C, Uranium, Radium, and Vanadium Ores Subcategory, as codified on January 1, 1983.

The licensee shall establish a detection monitoring program needed to establish the groundwater protection standards in subsection (5)(f) of this section. A detection monitoring program has two purposes. The initial purpose of the program is to detect leakage of hazardous constituents from the disposal area so that the need to set groundwater protection standards is monitored. If leakage is detected, the second purpose of the program is to generate data and information needed for the department to establish the standards under subsection (5)(f) of this section. The data and information must provide a sufficient basis to identify those hazardous constituents which require concentration limit standards and to enable the department to set the limits for those constituents and the compliance period. They may also need to provide the basis for adjustments to the point of compliance. For licenses in effect September 30, 1983, the detection monitoring programs must have been in place by October 1, 1984. For licenses issued after September 30, 1983, the detection monitoring programs must be in place when specified by the department in orders or license conditions. Once groundwater protection standards have been established pursuant to subsection (5)(f) of this section, the licensee shall establish and implement a compliance monitoring program. The purpose of the compliance monitoring program is to determine that the hazardous constituent concentrations in groundwater continue to comply with the standards set by the department. In conjunction with a corrective action program, the licensee shall establish and implement a corrective action monitoring program. The purpose of the corrective action monitoring program is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the corrective actions. Any monitoring program required by this paragraph may be based on existing monitoring programs to the extent the existing programs can meet the stated objective for the program.

Daily inspections of tailings or waste retention systems must be conducted by a qualified engineer or scientist and documented. The department must be immediately notified of any failure in a tailings or waste retention system that results in a release of tailings or waste into unrestricted areas, or of any unusual conditions (conditions not

contemplated in the design of the retention system) which if not corrected could indicate the potential or lead to failure of the system and result in a release of tailings or waste into unrestricted areas.

(9) Criterion 9 - (a) Pursuant to chapter 70A.310 RCW, and except as otherwise provided, financial surety arrangements must be established by each mill operator before the commencement of operations to assure that sufficient funds will be available to carry out the decontamination and decommissioning of the mill and site and for the reclamation of any tailings or waste disposal areas. The amount of funds to be ensured by such surety arrangements must be based on department-approved cost estimates in a department-approved plan, or a proposed revision to the plan submitted to the department for approval, if the proposed revision contains a higher cost estimate for:

(i) Decontamination and decommissioning of mill buildings and the milling site to levels which allow unrestricted use of these areas upon decommissioning; and

(ii) The reclamation of tailings or waste areas in accordance with technical criteria delineated in this section.

(b) Each cost estimate must contain:

(i) A detailed cost estimate for decontamination, decommissioning, and reclamation, in an amount reflecting:

(A) The cost of an independent contractor to perform the decontamination, decommissioning, and reclamation activities; and

(B) An adequate contingency factor.

(ii) An estimate of the amount of radioactive contamination in on-site subsurface material;

(iii) Identification of and justification for using the key assumptions contained in the decommissioning cost estimate; and

(iv) A description of the method of assuring funds for decontamination, decommissioning, and reclamation.

(c) The licensee shall submit this plan in conjunction with an environmental report that addresses the expected environmental impacts of the milling operation, decommissioning and tailings reclamation, and evaluates alternatives for mitigating these impacts. The plan must include a signed original of the financial instrument obtained to satisfy the surety arrangement requirements of this criterion (unless a previously submitted and approved financial instrument continues to cover the cost estimate for decommissioning). The surety arrangement must also cover the cost estimate and the payment of the charge for long-term surveillance and control required by subsection (10) of this section.

(d) To avoid unnecessary duplication and expense, the department may accept financial sureties that have been consolidated with financial or surety arrangements established to meet requirements of other federal or state agencies or local governing bodies for decommissioning, decontamination, reclamation, and long-term site surveillance and control, provided such arrangements are considered adequate to satisfy these requirements and that the portion of the surety which covers the decommissioning and reclamation of the mill, mill tailings site and associated areas, and the long-term funding charge is clearly identified and committed for use in accomplishing these activities.

(e) The licensee's surety mechanism will be reviewed annually by the department to assure, that sufficient funds would be available for completion of the reclamation plan if the work had to be performed by an independent contractor.

(f) The amount of surety liability should be adjusted to recognize any increases or decreases resulting from:

- (i) Inflation;
- (ii) Changes in engineering plans;
- (iii) Activities performed;
- (iv) Spills, leakage or migration of radioactive material producing additional contamination in on-site subsurface material that must be remediated to meet applicable remediation criteria;
- (v) Waste inventory increasing above the amount previously estimated;
- (vi) Waste disposal costs increasing above the amount previously estimated;
- (vii) Facility modifications;
- (viii) Changes in authorized possession limits;
- (ix) Actual remediation costs that exceed the previous cost estimate;
- (x) On-site disposal; and
- (xi) Any other conditions affecting costs.

(g) Regardless of whether reclamation is phased through the life of the operation or takes place at the end of operations, an appropriate portion of surety liability must be retained until final compliance with the reclamation plan is determined.

(h) The appropriate portion of surety liability retained until final compliance with the reclamation plan is determined will be at least sufficient at all times to cover the costs of decommissioning and reclamation of the areas that are expected to be disturbed before the next license renewal. The term of the surety mechanism must be open ended, unless it can be demonstrated that another arrangement would provide an equivalent level of assurance. This assurance would be provided with a surety instrument which is written for a specified time (for example five years) and which must be automatically renewed unless the surety notifies the department and the licensee with reasonable time (for example 90 days) before the renewal date of their intention not to renew. In such a situation the surety requirement still exists and the licensee would be required to submit an acceptable replacement surety within a brief time to allow at least 60 days for the department to collect.

(i) Proof of forfeiture must not be necessary to collect the surety. In the event that the licensee cannot provide an acceptable replacement surety within the required time, the surety shall be automatically collected before its expiration. The surety instrument must provide for collection of the full face amount immediately on demand without reduction for any reason, except for trustee fees and expenses provided for in a trust agreement, and that the surety will not refuse to make full payment. The conditions described previously would have to be clearly stated on any surety instrument which is not open-ended, and must be agreed to by all parties. Financial surety arrangements generally acceptable to the department are:

- (i) Trust funds;
- (ii) Surety bonds;
- (iii) Irrevocable letters of credit; and
- (iv) Combinations of the financial surety arrangements or other types of arrangements as may be approved by the department. If a trust is not used, then a standby trust must be set up to receive funds in the event the department exercises its right to collect the surety. The surety arrangement and the surety or trustee, as applicable, must be acceptable to the department. Self-insurance, or any arrangement which essentially constitutes self-insurance (for example, a contract with a state or federal agency), will not satisfy the surety require-

ment because this provides no additional assurance other than that which already exists through license requirements.

(10) Criterion 10 - (a) A minimum charge of \$250,000 (1978 United States dollars) accrued as specified in WAC 246-235-086(4) to cover the costs of long-term surveillance shall be paid by each mill operator to the agency prior to the termination of a uranium or thorium mill license. If site surveillance or control requirements at a particular site are determined, on the basis of a site-specific evaluation, to be significantly greater than those specified in (a) of this subsection (e.g., if fencing is determined to be necessary), variance in funding requirements may be specified by the department. The total charge to cover the costs of long-term surveillance shall be such that, with an assumed one percent annual real interest rate, the collected funds will yield interest in an amount sufficient to cover the annual costs of site surveillance. The charge will be adjusted annually prior to actual payments to recognize inflation. The inflation rate to be used is that indicated by the change in the consumer price index published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Contributions by a licensee to the long-term care trust fund pursuant to chapter 70A.310 RCW shall be transferred to cover the costs assessed under this criterion.

(11) Criterion 11 - These criteria relating to ownership of tailings and their disposal sites become effective on November 8, 1981, and apply to all licenses terminated, issued, or renewed after that date.

Any uranium or thorium milling license or tailings license shall contain such terms and conditions as NRC determines necessary to assure that prior to termination of the license, the licensee will comply with ownership requirements of this criterion for sites used for tailings disposal.

Title to the by-product material licensed pursuant to WAC 246-252-030 and land, including any interests therein (other than land owned by the United States or by the state of Washington) which is used for the disposal of any such by-product material, or is essential to ensure the long-term stability of such disposal site, shall be transferred to the United States or the state of Washington. In view of the fact that physical isolation must be the primary means of long-term control, and government land ownership is a desirable supplementary measure, ownership of certain severable subsurface interests (for example, mineral rights) may be determined to be unnecessary to protect the public health and safety and the environment. In any case, the applicant/operator must demonstrate a serious effort to obtain such subsurface rights, and must, in the event that certain rights cannot be obtained, provide notification in local public land records of the fact that the land is being used for the disposal of radioactive material and is subject to either a NRC general or specific license prohibiting the disruption and disturbance of the tailings. In some rare cases, such as may occur with deep burial where no ongoing site surveillance will be required, surface land ownership transfer requirements may be waived. For licenses issued before November 8, 1981, NRC may take into account the status of the ownership of such land, and interests therein, and the ability of a licensee to transfer title and custody thereof to the United States or the state. If NRC, subsequent to title transfer, determines that use of the surface or subsurface estates, or both, of the land transferred to the United States or to a state will not endanger the public health, safety, welfare or environment, NRC may permit the use of the surface or subsur-

face estates, or both, of such land in a manner consistent with the provisions provided in these criteria. If NRC permits such use of such land, it will provide the person who transferred such land with the right of first refusal with respect to such use of such land.

Material and land transferred to the United States or a state in accordance with this criterion must be transferred without cost to the United States or a state other than administrative and legal costs incurred in carrying out such transfer.

The provisions of this part, respecting transfer of title and custody to land and tailings and wastes, do not apply in the case of lands held in trust by the United States for any Indian Tribe, or lands owned by such Indian Tribe subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States. In the case of such lands which are used for the disposal of by-product material, as defined in this section, the licensee shall enter into arrangements with NRC as may be appropriate to assure the long-term surveillance of such lands by the United States.

(12) Criterion 12 - The final disposition of tailings or wastes at milling sites should be such that ongoing active maintenance is not necessary to preserve isolation. As a minimum, annual site inspections must be conducted by the government agency retaining ultimate custody of the site where tailings or wastes are stored, to confirm the integrity of the stabilized tailings or waste systems, and to determine the need, if any, for maintenance or monitoring. Results of the inspection must be reported to NRC within 60 days following each inspection. NRC may require more frequent site inspections if, on the basis of a site-specific evaluation, such a need appears necessary, due to the features of a particular tailings or waste disposal system.

(13) Criterion 13 - Secondary groundwater protection standards required by Criterion 5 of this section are concentration limits for individual hazardous constituents. The list of constituents found in Appendix A of this chapter, chapter 246-252 WAC, identifies the constituents for which standards must be set and complied with if the specific constituent is reasonably expected to be in or derived from the by-product material and has been detected in groundwater. For purposes of this criterion, the property of gross alpha activity will be treated as if it is a hazardous constituent. Thus, when setting standards under subsection (5)(j) of this section, the department will also set a limit for gross alpha activity.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040 and 2020 c 20. WSR 22-07-025, § 246-252-030, filed 3/9/22, effective 4/9/22. Statutory Authority: RCW 70.98.050 and 70.98.110. WSR 17-01-034, § 246-252-030, filed 12/12/16, effective 1/12/17; WSR 16-13-054, § 246-252-030, filed 6/10/16, effective 7/11/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 70.98.050. WSR 15-06-015, § 246-252-030, filed 2/23/15, effective 3/26/15. Statutory Authority: RCW 70.98.050 and 70.98.080. WSR 02-17-005, § 246-252-030, filed 8/8/02, effective 9/8/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 70.98.050. WSR 00-08-013, § 246-252-030, filed 3/24/00, effective 4/24/00; WSR 97-13-055, § 246-252-030, filed 6/16/97, effective 7/17/97; WSR 94-01-073, § 246-252-030, filed 12/9/93, effective 1/9/94. Statutory Authority: RCW 70.98.050 and 70.98.080. WSR 91-16-109 (Order 187), § 246-252-030, filed 8/7/91, effective 9/7/91. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-049 (Order 121), recodified as § 246-252-030, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91. Statutory Authority: RCW 70.98.080. WSR 87-01-031 (Order 2450), § 402-52-100, filed 12/11/86. Statutory

Authority: Chapter 70.121 RCW. WSR 81-16-031 (Order 1683), §
402-52-100, filed 7/28/81.]