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## **Environment Department Files Petition with NRC, Requests Hearing for Proposed Eunice Uranium Enrichment Facility**

(Santa Fe, NM) — The State of New Mexico through the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) today filed a petition for intervention and requested that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) hold a full public hearing concerning the NRC license application for a uranium enrichment facility proposed for Lea County. Louisiana Energy Services (LES) is seeking NRC approval to build the plant east of the town of Eunice in southeastern New Mexico.

NMED's petition, if granted by the NRC, will give the State of New Mexico legal standing in hearings on the proposed facility. This will give the state's representatives the right to raise issues important to New Mexico, ask questions and cross-examine witnesses.

"We believe the people of New Mexico deserve a seat at the table during these NRC proceedings," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. "This level of involvement will help clarify issues important to the state and its citizens including the future disposition of all waste products."

In its filing NMED raised several issues it plans to pursue during the hearing process. These include:

**Waste Storage and Disposal:** In its NRC application, LES requests to be allowed to buildup or store uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>) waste in New Mexico throughout the expected 30-year life of the facility. This is unacceptable to the State of New Mexico. To prevent the possible creation of a legacy stockpile, the state would prefer that the waste be moved out of New Mexico in a regular, timely fashion.

**Waste Classification:** LES's NRC application states that LES may classify its waste as resource material instead of as waste. The state believes all UF<sub>6</sub> waste material should be categorized as a waste, and the application should adequately provide for the timely and safe disposal of this waste outside the State of New Mexico.

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**Financial Assurance:** Based upon research conducted with outside waste disposal firms, NMED believes that the proposed financial assurance amounts set forth in the NRC application are inadequate. The application sets forth a cost estimate for waste disposal and decommissioning of the facility of \$1.5 billion. NMED's review found cost estimates for just disposal to be between \$1.9 and \$7.2 billion.

**Health and Safety Requirements:** The application does not include adequate information to demonstrate that the issuance of the license will not be inimical to health and safety as required by NRC regulations. The application does provide radiation dose quantities, but these are not supported by calculation protocols, formulae, or variables (e.g., occupancy factors, seasonal variations or diffusion coefficients). This additional information must be provided so that the information in the application can be verified.

Based upon these issues, NMED has requested that the NRC hold a full and complete public hearing on this license application and grant NMED the request to intervene in order to raise these issues for the State of New Mexico.

“NMED does not have a position for or against this facility,” said Secretary Curry. “All we are seeking at this point is the greatest amount of transparency possible from LES and the greatest amount of clarity possible on these plans for the people of New Mexico. This information is needed in order for us to ensure that human health and the environment are fully protected. I have been happy with the level of cooperation and information sharing we have seen so far from LES and I am hopeful that this will continue.”

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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