

DOE evaluating FFTF medical isotope proposal

The Department of Energy has begun a 60-day review of one expression of interest in using the Fast Flux Test Facility to produce isotopes for medicine, research and industrial applications.

A review and report on options for reactor restart or shutdown was commissioned by Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham in April. The final report was submitted on July 27 by Mike Holland, director of the review team.

Based on the review of all options and the expressions of commercial interest, the review team concluded that one submittal provides new information worthy of further consideration for potential commercial use of the FFTF and other surplus Hanford facilities such as the Fuels and Materials Examination Facility for the production of medical and industrial isotopes.

A working group that includes DOE's real property and procurement specialists and legal counsel will evaluate the proposal by the end of September. The Secretary of Energy will then decide whether to pursue disposition of the FFTF for commercial use or move ahead with facility deactivation.

The final report forwarded to the Secretary includes a summary of 20 existing studies, reports, assessments of need and environmental reviews that have been done. They provide background information about isotope production, plutonium and tritium production, nonproliferation programs, research and development, Hanford Site waste cleanup and Hanford stakeholder input regarding the FFTF.

The FFTF was shut down in 1992, and its nuclear fuel was removed. The reactor is currently maintained in a safe standby condition. ♦