

# Northwest Medical Isotopes' Facility Takes Another Step Forward

BY EXCHANGEMONITOR

A medical isotope production facility planned by Northwest Medical Isotopes has cleared another obstacle, passing a safety review by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The Corvallis, Ore.-based company was notified of the results of the NRC staff safety evaluation report in a Nov. 16 letter from the commission. “[S]taff finds that the preliminary design and analysis of the NWMI production facility ... (1) provides reasonable assurance that the final design will conform to the design basis; (2) includes an adequate margin of safety; (3) demonstrates that SSCs adequately provide for the prevention of accidents and the mitigation of consequences of accidents; and (4) meets applicable regulatory requirements as well as applicable NRC guidance,” according to the report.

Based on those findings, NRC staff recommended the commission “make the necessary findings with respect to the safety of the construction permit” in line with federal regulations, the report says. However, the safety determination does not provide assurance that the commission will approve the construction permit Northwest Medical Isotopes is seeking for its molybdenum-99 production plant at the Discovery Ridge Research Park in Columbia, Mo., the NRC letter says.

The commission has scheduled a hearing for Jan. 23 on the construction permit.

Earlier this month, the NRC Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards recommended the commission approve issuance of the construction permit.

The United States has no domestic production capacity for molybdenum-99, which decays into technetium-99m, an isotope used in medical imaging for heart disease and other health dangers. Several companies plan facilities for manufacturing the isotope. Northwest says its planned facility could meet half the need for mo-99 in North America. It would need a separate NRC license to operate the plant.