Consultation Backgrounder

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) has released its regulatory document, REGDOC-1.3.1, *Licence Application Guide: Uranium Mines and Mills*, for public consultation. The following information is designed to help Canadians participate in our public consultation. It provides an overview of all the important concepts associated with REGDOC-1.3.1.

Uranium Mines and Mills

Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive element used for fuel in nuclear power reactors. Canada is one of the world's largest uranium producers. Uranium is mined to provide uranium ore which is processed at a milling facility to produce uranium concentrate. The uranium concentrate is processed further to create fuel for nuclear reactors.

At this time, all operating uranium mines and mills in Canada are located in the Athabasca Basin area of Northern Saskatchewan, a part of the Canadian Shield that contains the worlds highest-grade uranium ore.

The CNSC has received licence applications for three new mines and mills since 2019.

Regulatory oversight

The CNSC regulates the full lifecycle of a uranium mine or mill. An applicant can request a licence for any stage of the lifecycle, including site preparation and construction, operating, decommissioning and release from licensing phases. The CNSC reviews the licence application and determines whether the licence applicant is qualified and has made adequate provisions for the protection of health and safety of person and the environment.

As with other major facilities, licences for uranium mines and mills are issued for specific time periods and all renewals of existing licences and all proposals for new mining and milling activities require Commission approvals.

Licence application guides

The CNSC publishes licence application guides to help applicants to better understand the licensing requirements and guidance associated with the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and its associated regulations. Licence application guides identify relevant regulations, nuclear standards and technical guidance documents an applicant should refer to when preparing an application.

CNSC staff review all information in an application to ensure that the submission is complete and identifies how the applicant will meet all requirements before the submission is brought to the independent Commission for a decision.

Regulatory document

REGDOC-1.3.1 is a licence application guide for proposed new uranium mines and mills and for license renewals for existing uranium mines and mills. It contains:

1. an introduction that sets the scope of the document
2. an overview of the licensing basis and licensing process
3. general administrative information
4. regulatory requirements and guidance
5. an appendix that lists reference documents by CNSC's safety and control areas (SCA)

The CNSC groups its regulatory requirements and expectations for the safety performance of programs into 14 SCAs, on topics such as environmental protection, physical design and security. Learn more about the CNSC's SCAs at nuclearsafety.gc.ca.

The REGDOC-1.3.1 does not contain information about specific current or future applications for new Uranium mines. Information on proposed uranium mines and mills projects can be found on the CNSC's website.

Public consultation

The CNSC has posted REGDOC-1.3.1 for public consultation on letstalknuclearsafety.ca.

Once the public consultation period closes, you will have a further opportunity to review all the comments we've received and provide more input during a feedback period. After the feedback period is complete, the CNSC will review all the comments received and update the REGDOC accordingly. Finally, REGDOC-1.3.1 will be presented to the Commission at a public meeting.

The public consultation on REGDOC-1.3.1 is the opportunity for the CNSC to hear from Canadians about this document. Provide your feedback at letstalknuclearsafety.ca by DATE (to be added once known).