SECOND BIG INSPECTION AT REPROCESSING PLANT

During the Non-Proliferation Treaty ratification period the Agency continues to gain experience of safeguards work under the 40 agreements already entered into with 30 countries.

At the beginning of May the second inspection of a plant processing commercially-owned nuclear fuel began in New York State, USA. It was expected to last for six weeks or more, the work being carried out on a shift system to cover the 24-hour-a-day operation of the plant.

Altogether 16 inspectors, drawn from 11 of the 102 Member States, were engaged in the task at the Nuclear Fuel Services plant (NFS) in the Western New York Centre of the State Atomic and Space Development Authority, West Valley, NY.

A similar operation was carried out in 1967. The purpose of Agency safeguards is to ensure that the nuclear materials involved are not diverted to potential military applications.

The nuclear fuel being reprocessed was used in the generation of power at the Yankee Atomic Electric Company power plant at Rowe, Massachusetts. The materials to be recovered in the course of the reprocessing operation consist of uranium, which was leased by Yankee from the US Atomic Energy Commission and will be returned to the Commission, and of plutonium. The latter was created in the course of the power generation under Agency safeguards and is owned by Yankee.

The recovered plutonium, which will be stored for future use or sale, will remain under the IAEA's safeguards and be periodically inspected.

Under a 1964 agreement between USA and the IAEA, the Yankee atomic plant was placed under the Agency's safeguards as a demonstration of how the system could operate and as a means of developing improved inspection techniques and of training personnel. As a result of this NFS, which is the facility where irradiated fuel from Yankee is chemically treated, became the first reprocessing plant to be placed under the same system. The inspections there are providing valuable experience by enabling the inspectors to familiarize themselves with the complicated nature of this type of plant and processes. They also enable the practices and methods to be elaborated and refined.