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Centrus's American Centrifuge Plant, in Piketon, Ohio. (Photo: Centrus Energy)

**FUEL**

**Centrus approved for HALEU production**

Centrus Energy Corporation on June 14 announced that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved the company's license amendment request to produce high-assay low-enriched uranium at its Piketon, Ohio, enrichment facility. The Piketon plant is now the only U.S. facility licensed to enrich uranium up to 20 percent uranium-235, and it is expected to begin demonstrating HALEU production early next year, according to Centrus.

"This approval is a major milestone in our contract with the Department of Energy," said Daniel Poneman, Centrus president and chief executive officer. "We appreciate the dedicated and rigorous work of the NRC staff and commissioners in their review and approval of our license amendment request." The commission approved the request on June 11.

HALEU-based fuels will be required for most of the advanced reactor designs currently under development and may also be used in next-generation fuels for the existing fleet of reactors in the United States and around the world, the Centrus announcement stated, adding that developers of nine of the 10 advanced reactor designs selected for funding under the DOE's Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program, including the two demonstration reactors, have said that they will rely on HALEU-based fuels.

Under a 2019 contract with the DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy, Centrus is constructing a cascade of 16 AC100M centrifuges to demonstrate the production of HALEU. The three-year, \$115 million cost-shared contract runs through mid-2022. Centrus, which released an update on the progress of construction of the demonstration cascade in March, anticipates completing performance under the contract in early 2022. If sufficient funding is provided to continue operation, Centrus said, the license can be amended to extend the term.

For more on HALEU, check out the article "Looking high and low for HALEU" in the September 2019 issue of *Nuclear News*, page 26. ☒