NRC approves proposed decommissioning rulemaking

On November 3, 2021, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission approved a proposed rule to amend its regulations for nuclear power plants that are transitioning from operations to decommissioning. After changes requested by the NRC commissioners are made by agency staff, the proposed rule is to be published in the Federal Register, initiating a 75-day comment period. As of this writing, the proposed rule has not been published.

In December 2014, in response to the growing number of nuclear power plant closures, the commissioners directed the NRC staff to develop a rulemaking on power reactor decommissioning. The rulemaking is intended to take into account the reduced radiological risks associated with power reactors that have been permanently shut down and defueled. Current regulations make little distinction between an operating reactor and one that is shut down and has been defueled, requiring licensees to seek exemptions and license amendments on a case-by-case basis as they transition to decommissioning.