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Draft of state nuclear-waste rule

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WATERBURY — Regulations governing how the state will store its low-level radioactive waste got less than glowing reviews Wednesday at their public debut.

About 50 people attending a state Department of Environmental Protection hearing at City Hall were skeptical about the state's intentions, unsure that the materials can be safely stored for any length of time, and unhappy that as much as \$100 million in public funds will be spent to build the facility.

"We object to any of this," said Charlene LaVale, a lawyer who represents concerned interests in Windsor.

Low-level radioactive waste consists of a variety of materials. It includes the paper

towels and lab gowns that become slightly contaminated with radioactivity in hospitals, university laboratories and industry. It also includes highly radioactive parts from nuclear power reactors. Some of this material loses its radioactivity in a matter of months, some will remain dangerously radioactive for centuries.

Currently, all states ship these wastes to either South Carolina, Nevada or Washington. But those states have grown tired of being the nation's dumping grounds for radioactive garbage. By 1996, according to federal law, all states must provide their own storage sites.

Connecticut had hoped to join a compact with other northeastern states to operate one site. When those plans fell apart, Connecticut

decided to build its own facility. The Connecticut Hazardous Waste Management Service is reviewing possible sites for such a facility. The quasi-public service will announce its three final choices this spring. Then narrow that down to a single site by year's end.

But the DEP must have regulations to manage such a facility and oversee its construction, operation and eventual closing. A draft of those regulations was the subject of Wednesday's hearing; other hearings will be held tonight at 7 in Norwich City Hall and Friday at 10 a.m. at Room 505 of the State Office Building in Hartford. The DEP will also accept written comments until Feb. 14.

Most of the people at Wednesday's hearing received their copies of the regulations a few