PRAIRIE ISLAND SPENT FUEL STORAGE FAQ
http://www.nspco.com/nsp/spntful.htm#q13
6/6/97

NSP has been safely storing used nuclear fuel in sealed steel containers outdoors at the Prairie Island nuclear power plant since May 1995. NSP is storing spent fuel outside the plant because the site's storage pool is full and the federal government has not yet provided either temporary storage or a permanent disposal site.

Radiation measurements made near the site show no measurable additional off-site radiation exposure from the loaded containers stored there.

The Minnesota Legislature authorized NSP to load and store up to 17 containers at the plant site as the company meets a number of requirements spelled out in the authorizing legislation.

Prairie Island Spent Fuel Storage Frequently Asked Questions

• • •

Why don't you just keep it in the plant? Why not build another pool or put more in the pool you already have? Why build a second site? Why not ship it somewhere else? Can't the fuel be reprocessed?

NSP and state regulators reviewed several ways to store additional used nuclear fuel at Prairie Island. They agreed outdoor dry storage in sealed steel containers was the best option for NSP and its customers. The current storage pool at the plant is full.

A new pool would be much more expensive than dry storage and offers no significant safety or environmental advantages. There are no commercially available storage pools to which NSP could ship spent fuel for storage. Also, while reprocessing is possible, there are no operating commercial reprocessing facilities in the United States, and shipping the fuel to a foreign country for reprocessing would be prohibitively expensive.

How much radiation does a storage site give off? Does water run-off from the facility become radioactive? Will the containers leak?

The amount of off-site radiation from the Prairie Island storage site will be so small it cannot even be measured by today's most sensitive instruments. The used fuel is a solid ceramic inside metal tubes. It is not a powder, liquid or gas. It does not readily "leak." If both lid seals were to fail, an alarm would go off and only inert, non-radioactive helium gas would escape. Water coming in contact with the containers does not become radioactive, so storage site run-off is not

radioactive.

...

Why is NSP looking for a second site?

The Minnesota Legislature ordered NSP to seek a second storage site in Goodhue County. NSP has enough room at its existing on-site storage facility for all the storage containers the plant will need.

What is the reason for the second site?

It is unclear why the legislature ordered a second site. The existing site is more than large enough, and state and federal agencies have found it to be safe for area residents and the environment. Further, the existing site does not require off-site transportation of used reactor fuel, as the alternate site in Goodhue County would.