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Rules and Directives
Branch
USNRC

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324 East Main Street
Grantsville, UT 84029
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David L. Meyer, Chief, Rules and Directives Branch
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Mr. Meyer:

I am a citizen of Tooele County, one valley east of the proposed Goshute reservation nuclear waste storage site. I've listened to both sides of the discussion on this topic, attended several of your public hearings and read countless pamphlets and articles. My family, including my seven children, are becoming increasingly concerned as we see that the arguments of those in favor of storing at the Goshute site are short-sighted and downplay our very real worries at living 20 miles from what would be the world's largest facility of this kind. We are told the technology of storage is well understood; how can the long-term impacts of weather, earthquakes, environmental factors, etc. be known when the industry has been storing spent rods for only a dozen years? Who can predict the far distant future, since these materials will still be dangerous after hundreds of years?

Scientists in favor of nuclear energy try to tell us that since we're all exposed to small amounts of atmospheric radiation all the time, why should we mind being next to this storage site. How can they have the audacity to compare the minimal radiation we're exposed to in an airplane or with an x-ray with a facility that would house millions of times more radiation than was released in the bombings of Japan at the end of WWII? These assurances by your agency, the BLM and these scientists that the storage will be safe, temporary and poses no threat to the surrounding populace sound suspiciously familiar. They are the same assurances that were given to the downwinders on Nevada and southern Utah during the era of open-air nuclear testing.

In all of the controversy, I'm trying to not be carried away by fear or speculation, but my common sense constantly asks the question, "IF THE SPENT NUCLEAR RODS ARE SO SAFE, WHY CAN'T THEY REMAIN IN STORAGE WHERE THEY ARE? Why are the communities back east, whose electricity is provided by the nuclear industry, so adamant that these spent rods be sent "somewhere out west," if storage is so safe? If the industry is so certain the highly radioactive rods pose no threat when properly stored, then why is the NRC and the BLM begging and bribing Native Americans, sovereign nations outside of the U.S. legal system, to take the waste on their tribal lands?" The answer is clear; because spent nuclear rods are dangerous and potentially hazardous to all life!

A Salt Lake newspaper, The Desert News, quoted the National Academy of Sciences in an article on August 13 of this year:

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“At many sites, radiological and nonradiological hazardous wastes will remain, posing risks to humans and the environment for tens or even hundreds of thousands of years. Complete elimination of unacceptable risks to humans and the environment will not be achieved, now or in the foreseeable future.”

As a result of my research, I must say that I do not believe you when you say that storing 4,000 casks of spent nuclear rods 20 miles from my home will not pose any threat to the health and safety of my family and community. The NRC and the BLM members could make your decisions, ship the rods to Utah, then go home to your homes in other parts of the country where you and your families do not have to be affected by the radiation when something goes wrong. The lack of responsibility shown by you, by the BLM, by Private Fuel Storage and the eastern utilities it represents and by the communities in the east who don't want their waste “in their backyards” is appalling. This nuclear waste should not come to Tooele County; we are already overburdened by too many environmental and hazardous waste companies and agencies. We have more than enough concerns to police and from whom to demand accountability. As for what to do with the spent rods? This dilemma and the surrounding controversy is the natural byproduct of choosing to produce nuclear energy. If that is what your community chooses, then your community should take responsibility for the waste generated. That is, again, just common sense.

Sincerely,

Shawn B. Ellsworth