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USNRC

From: "Patricia T. Birnie" <birnie@gci-net.com>
To: TWFN_DO.twf4_po(CAG)
Date: Fri, Jun 25, 1999 10:36 AM
Subject: Comment re: Proposed Rule: Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes in a Proposed Geological Repository at Yucca Mt., Nevada

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DOCKET NUMBER
 PROPOSED RULE **PR 2,19,20 et al.**
 (64FR8640)

GE Stockholders' Alliance
 5349 W. Bar X Street
 Tucson, AZ 85713
 June 25, 1999

Secretary
 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
 Washington, DC 20555-0001

RE: Proposed Rule: Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes in a Proposed Geological Repository at Yucca Mt., Nevada

Dear NRC Reviewer:

We strongly object to the Proposed Rule: Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes in a Proposed Geological Repository at Yucca Mt., NV.

It is obvious that this proposed rule has been promulgated (at the insistence of nuclear industry vested interests) to expedite the establishment of a high-level radioactive waste repository at Yucca Mt....at the expense of public health. This proposed rule is not in the public interest.

According to the Energy Policy Act of 1992, the EPA was required to set standards for limits to radiation releases, public health and overall environmental protection. This is the procedure that should be followed. This proposed rule change (upon which these comments have been invited) should be withdrawn until the EPA has set the standards. Then the NRC should adapt its repository licensing rules to meet, include and uphold the EPA standards.

In addition to NRC's trying to usurp EPA's legal authority, we have several other concerns about the proposed NRC rule.

1. We believe the proposed rule does not adequately protect the public health, especially for future generations. The assumptions upon which it is based greatly underestimates the potential risks regarding future human intrusion. Because the repository must continue to function for 10,000 years, the standards should be far more stringent because of these uncertainties.

2. We believe the standards for a permanent repository of high level radioactive waste should be more stringent (rather than less) than the standards for WIPP.

3. We believe there is a serious design and safety omission not to prescribe a limit for thermal energy output per unit area for the high-level radioactive waste storage. It is obvious that this should be one of the crucial sources of risk, and should be properly addressed.

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As we understand the mandate of the NRC, its first obligation is protection of the public health. Far too many decisions of the NRC have been to favor the nuclear industry at the expense of the public health. You have the opportunity to restore public confidence in the NRC by withdrawing this proposed rule, to make it possible for the EPA to do its legally-required job of establishing proper standards.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Patricia Birnie, Chair
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