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USNRC

From: davechannon <dave@volcanicvideo.com>
To: TWFN_DO.twf4_po(CAG)
Date: Wed, Jun 30, 1999 4:30 PM
Subject: RE: Proposed Rule : Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes in a Proposed Geologic Repository at Yucca Mountain

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

OFFICE OF
RULEMAKING
ADJUDICATION

Re: Proposed Rule: Disposal of High-level Radioactive Wastes in a Proposed Geologic Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada

Dear Secretary:

I vehemently oppose your agency's proposed rule on the disposal of high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain on several counts.

First, Yucca Mountain is a totally inappropriate place to bury such long lasting, highly toxic waste, because it is geologically unstable and physically porous. Nevada is the third most seismically active state in the country, and hundreds of earthquakes have been recorded within 10 miles of the proposed repository within the last 20 years. In addition, fairly recent studies from scientists at Los Alamos have shown that radioactive isotopes from atmospheric atomic bomb testing that began in the 1940s have found their way deep into the mountain, indicating that it is much leakier than anybody thought.

Second, the proposed rule does not adequately account for the thermal heat generated by the high-level radioactive waste in the repository emplacement area -- a serious design flaw-- and Yucca Mountain may not be capable of containing such high levels of heat and radioactivity.

Third, this proposed rule would allow lower standards of protection for radioactive releases from Yucca Mountain than from other licensed nuclear waste repositories. Nobody should have to accept radioactive contamination of their community or its resources. However, having said that, it is unconscionable that Nevadans should be expected to tolerate more radioactive releases into their environment and water supply because the place your agency, the Dept. of Energy and the nuclear industry would like to store their garbage cannot meet higher standards. Nevadans are already exposed to radioactivity from two other sources: the Nevada Test Site and the Beatty low-level radioactive waste dump. They should not be subjected to another source of radioactive contamination.

Fourth, I am especially alarmed that this proposed rule would allow your agency to usurp the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's legal jurisdiction, under the Energy Policy Act of 1992, to set standards regarding radiation releases, public health and environmental protection for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. Your agency should formulate its licensing requirements on EPA standards, instead of fashioning environmental, public health and safety requirements to fit your license.

Fifth, there is no sound reason to rush into licensing any central underground repository, let alone one as unsuitable as Yucca Mountain. The January 1998 deadlines for the federal government to accept the nuclear industry's garbage -- which accounts for more than 90

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percent of the waste in question -- that were set down in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 were completely arbitrary. In fact, at the time numerous people involved in the issue knew there was little to no likelihood that the federal government would have a facility ready to accept the waste. Time has proven that right. Yet, that arbitrary date, along with strong-arm tactics by the nuclear industry, are now primarily responsible for the sense of urgency to license Yucca Mountain as an underground repository for the nation's nuclear waste.

This waste will long surpass any of us who are here now, and evidence is increasing that Yucca Mountain will not contain it for the length of time it will remain dangerous. The U.S. government has no right to saddle future generations with the environmental catastrophe that will ensue when the waste casks begin to leak and leach through the mountain. Nor does it have the right to risk the current public's health by ordering a transportation program that would put these most lethal of all poisons on public roads and rails as they make their way through 43 states en route to Nevada.

Withdraw this proposed rule! And in the future, let the priority of the public health of this generation and those to come guide all your decisions regarding nuclear waste.

Sincerely,

Karen Charman
New York, NY