

February 13, 2003

Mr. Les W. Bradshaw, Department Manager
Department of Natural Resources
and Federal Facilities
Nye County
1210 E. Basin Rd., Ste. #6
Pahrump, Nevada 89060

Dear Mr. Bradshaw:

I am responding on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letter of December 17, 2002, regarding testing of spent nuclear fuel transport casks. You stated that you do not believe that testing representative casks in NRC's Package Performance Study (PPS) is sufficient and requested that some of the tests be conducted in Nye County.

The scope of NRC's testing program is still under consideration by the NRC staff and has yet to be evaluated by the Commission. The Commission will consider your views along with those from other interested groups and the public after the staff has completed the process of collecting and analyzing comments on the PPS. In that regard, the draft PPS test protocols report was just issued. A copy of that report is enclosed.

The Commission does intend to conduct the PPS in a manner that maximizes the information obtained with the available funds. Although the Commission anticipates that full-scale testing of casks will be part of the final PPS, we also expect that the predictive capabilities of computer modeling will be utilized as a complementary tool. In addition, although we understand your desire to have some of the testing performed in Nye County, we believe that existing or upgraded testing facilities at the Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, provide for the most efficient use of the limited resources available.

The NRC staff will notify you as soon as public meetings regarding the PPS test protocols are scheduled. Currently, meetings are being planned for Rockville, Maryland; Chicago, Illinois; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Pahrump, Nevada. The Commission hopes your organization will continue to support the PPS meetings as it has in the past.

If you have any further questions or comments, please contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: As stated