

December 23, 1996

Mr. Gregg Taylor
Nuclear News Editor
555 N. Kensington Avenue
La Grange Park, IL 60526

RE: Response to Science Article

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Your article, "Report: Volcanic Hazard One in 70 Million Per Year," Nuclear News, November 1996, p. 52, states: "The panel of scientists, representing the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the state of Nevada and led by Los Alamos National Laboratory, mapped ..." This gives an incorrect impression. This expert elicitation was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The expert panel had no members from the NRC or our contractor, the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses (CNWRA) in San Antonio, Texas. Also, to our knowledge, neither the State of Nevada, nor its contractors were members of the expert panel. The NRC declined to participate on the elicitation panel, in order to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, since NRC staff may be called on to review the product of the study as part of our pre-licensing and licensing activities. Although they did not participate as members of the expert panel, technical staff from the NRC, CNWRA, and State of Nevada contractors did present information to the expert panel for use in their deliberations. This information included interpretations of data and estimates of probability for volcanism in the vicinity of Yucca Mountain.

Sincerely,

John H. Austin, Chief
Performance Assessment & HLW
Integration Branch
Division of Waste Management, NMSS

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John H. Austin".

John H. Austin, Chief
Performance Assessment & HLW
Integration Branch
Division of Waste Management, NMSS