

July 10, 2006

Mr. and Mrs. Earle Hollingshead
1216 East 5730 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84121

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hollingshead:

I am responding to your letter, to President Bush, in which you express your concerns over the transportation of nuclear waste to Utah. Your letter was referred to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for reply, because NRC is responsible for reviewing and approving the design of shipping containers used to transport high-level radioactive waste.

NRC goes to great lengths to assure that such shipping containers can withstand the conditions of routine transportation, as well as severe rail and highway accidents. We do this by assuring that the designs for shipping containers for high-level radioactive waste meet very rigorous safety standards, and that the fabrication of these containers is undertaken using approved quality assurance programs. These measures have contributed significantly to the outstanding safety record for high-level radioactive material shipments achieved over the past 40 years. During that period, there have been thousands of high-level radioactive material shipments within the United States, including shipments through Utah, without a single release of radioactive material. Also, low-level radioactive waste has been safely shipped in and through Utah for many years, for instance, on its way to disposal at the Clive, Utah facility.

The NRC also has the responsibility for licensing storage facilities for spent nuclear fuel from commercial nuclear power plants, such as the Private Fuel Storage (PFS) facility that we recently licensed in Utah. As part of the approval process, PFS underwent a rigorous multi-year environmental and safety review by NRC. This review helped to assure that workers at the facility and members of the public would be protected from potentially elevated levels of radiation exposures during normal operations and credible accidents.

In closing, let me emphasize that NRC's primary mission in approving the transportation, storage, and disposal of radioactive materials is the protection of public health and safety. We understand your concern about the potential adverse health effects of radiation exposure. We believe that the storage, disposal, and transportation of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste in approved shipping containers and at licensed facilities can be conducted safely, with very low risk to the public, under existing safety standards. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (301) 415-8506 or by email at EXE@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Earl P. Easton
Senior Level Advisor for Transportation
Spent Fuel Project Office
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

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