

NRCREP - American Nuclear Society Comment on Low Level Waste Program

From: Harold Finley McFarlane <Harold.McFarlane@inl.gov>
To: <NRCREP@nrc.gov>
Date: 09/08/2006 10:31 AM
Subject: American Nuclear Society Comment on Low Level Waste Program
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Dear Sir or Madam,

The American Nuclear Society (ANS) appreciates the NRC soliciting comments on its low level radioactive waste (LLRW) program. This is a time of change and challenge in the LLRW area with recent industry consolidation and the upcoming closure of the Barnwell disposal facility to the majority of this country. ANS has prepared a position paper on LLRW, which is attached. We sincerely hope that the NRC will consider the ANS position in determining future strategy.

Sincerely,
 Harold F. McFarlane
 President, American Nuclear Society

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Disposal of Low-Level Radioactive Waste

Position Statement
Revised November 2004

The American Nuclear Society (ANS) believes that it is in the best interests of our country and society to develop and maintain adequate disposal capability for all classes of commercially produced Low Level Radioactive Waste (LLRW). Accordingly, the ANS recommends prompt actions to ensure that adequate and safe LLRW disposal capability continues to be maintained. LLRW is waste produced from the use of radioactive materials in industrial, academic, research and medical activities, nuclear power generation and site decontamination. It does not include spent nuclear fuel or any other material considered high level radioactive waste.

Safety, security, and cost issues arise when LLRW accumulates at thousands of sites licensed to possess radioactive material. Currently, there is limited disposal capability because no new facilities have been created following the compact system established by the LLRW Act of 1980. After July 1, 2008, there will no longer be a disposal site available for the two higher classes of LLRW produced in 36 states, and only one site for the lower class of LLRW produced in these states ⁽¹⁾. Actions need to be taken soon to provide for adequate LLRW disposal capability, instead of waiting and monitoring the situation, as recommended by the General Accounting Office ⁽²⁾. Capability must include both access and capacity. The lack of disposal capability could stop or impede various research, medical and industrial activities and have a deleterious effect on public health and quality of life.

Accordingly, the ANS supports:

1. Prompt Federal government actions to resolve issues regarding state and federal responsibility and control over LLRW disposal, including transportation to disposal sites and facilitating development of such sites.

One approach that could be considered is to make current LLRW disposal sites managed by the DOE available for commercial LLRW. If and when additional disposal capability is needed, sufficient LLRW disposal capacity should be established on federal land to accommodate the needs of the nation. The facilities would be developed by commercial companies and regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in accordance with the applicable safety regulations.

2. Allowing existing compacts with operating disposal facilities to continue to function within the framework established by the current LLRW Policy Act. That framework should continue to be available for compacts or states in the future.

Disposal of Low-Level Radioactive Waste

Position Statement 11

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3. Continued minimization of waste generation and assurance that LLRW is packaged, handled and temporarily stored in a safe manner.

⁽¹⁾ On July 1, 2008, the Barnwell, South Carolina site will be closed to waste generated outside the Atlantic Compact. Envirocare of Utah will be the only site available to LLRW generators in 36 states. This site is not licensed for biological waste, such as produced by biomedical research, or the two higher classes of LLRW. Other states will have access to a compact operated site.

⁽²⁾ GAO-04-064 "Low -Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Availability Adequate in the Short Term, but Oversight Needed to Identify Any Future Shortfalls", June 2004

The American Nuclear Society, founded in 1954, is a not-for-profit scientific and educational society of over 11,000 scientists, engineers, and educators from universities, government and private laboratories, and industry.

Position Statements are the considered opinions and judgments of the Society in matters related to nuclear science and technology. They are intended to provide an objective basis for weighing the facts in reaching decisions on important national issues.