UNITED STATES OF AMERICA NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BEFORE THE COMMISSION

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In the Matter of)	
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY)	Docket No. PAPO-00
C.S. DELTARTMENT OF ENERGY)	Docket 110. 1711 O-00
(High-Level Waste Repository:)	ASLBP No. 04-829-01-PAPO
Pre-Application Matters))	
)	

THE NUCLEAR ENERGY INSTITUTE'S COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COMMISSION'S AUGUST 13, 2008 MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

I. <u>Introduction and Summary</u>

In a Memorandum and Order issued August 13, 2008, the Commission, *inter alia*, announced its "plans to double the existing time permitted to file answers and replies pursuant to 10 C.F.R. §§ 2.309(h)(1) and (h)(2), to fifty (50) and fourteen (14) days, respectively" and afforded an opportunity to participants "in the ongoing matter before the PAPO Board [to] . . . provide comments on these proposed extensions of time" Given the expected number of petitions to intervene and – even more so – the large number of anticipated contentions, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) believes that the expanded periods of time are appropriate, but <u>only at the initial intervention stage</u> of the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding. In addition, NEI requests that -- in noting this limitation and to avoid potential confusion -- the Commission note that, under section 2.309(h)(1), only the Department of Energy

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¹ *U.S. Department of Energy* (High-Level Waste Repository: Pre-Application Matters), CLI-08-18, 68 NRC __ (slip op. at 5-6).

(DOE) and Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff (NRC Staff) are allowed to file answers to initial petitions and contentions. This latter point is discussed further below.²

II. Discussion

The Commission's regulations in 10 C.F.R. § 2.309, "Hearing requests, petitions to intervene, requirements for standing, and contentions," apply to the high-level radioactive waste repository licensing proceeding.³ Regarding who may answer a request for hearing, a petition to intervene, and/or contentions, the regulations state:

The applicant/licensee, the NRC staff, and any other <u>party</u> to a proceeding may file an answer to request for hearing, a petition to intervene, and/or proffered contentions within twenty-five days after service of the request for hearing, petition, and/or contentions.⁴

Thus, on its face, the regulation provides that, aside from DOE (as the "applicant") and the NRC Staff, only <u>parties</u> to a proceeding may file answers to contentions. At the initial intervention stage of the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding, when contentions are first proffered, there will be no "parties" aside from DOE and the NRC Staff – only <u>potential</u> parties.⁵ Accordingly, by their terms, the regulations permit only DOE and the NRC Staff to answer initial petitions for intervention and contentions. Further, the Statement of Considerations accompanying the intervention rules makes the point crystal clear:

Answers and Replies. Section 2.309(h) allows the applicant or licensee and the NRC staff twenty-five (25) days to file written

² NEI sought to have this matter addressed by the Advisory Pre-License Application Presiding Officer (APAPO) Board in June. However, NEI's request for consideration of the point was denied in an unpublished Memorandum and Order, issued July 1, 2008, on the basis that it was founded on an incorrect reading of an earlier APAPO Board Order.

³ 10 C.F.R. § 2.1000.

⁴ 10 C.F.R. § 2.309(h)(1) (emphasis added).

⁵ 10 C.F.R. § 1.1001 does reference "party" as including "the host State, any affected unit of local government as defined in Section 2 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, as amended (42 U.SC. 10101), any affected Indian Tribe as defined in section 2 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, as amended (42 U.S.C. 10101)" However, that definition is explicitly subject to the proviso of 10 C.F.R. § 2.309 that there be determination that the entity "has proposed at least an admissible contention . . ." *See* 10 C.F.R. § 2.309(a) and 2.309(d)(2).

answers to requests for hearing/petitions to intervene and contentions, and allows the petitioner to file a written reply to the applicant/licensee and staff answers within seven (7) days after service of any answer. No other written answers or replies will be entertained.⁶

This distinction is clear elsewhere in the regulations. When the Commission wants its regulations to refer to persons seeking to be parties, it has done so explicitly. For example, section 2.4 denominates a collective category of entities that includes both "part[ies]," and "an individual or organization that has petitioned to intervene in a proceeding or requested a hearing but that has not yet been granted party status by an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board or presiding officer" as "participant."

As another example, the regulations provide that a "requestor/petitioner may file a reply to any answer . . ." The intervention regulations could have been crafted to provide that a "requestor/petitioner" may file answers to intervention petitions, but they weren't. Thus, while the Commission could have drawn the line with respect to filing answers elsewhere, it did not.

Clearly, the Commission's regulations permit only DOE and the NRC Staff to answer the initial petitions for intervention and contentions in this proceeding. Under the regulation, the authority contained in section 2.309(h)(1) for "any other party to a proceeding" to file an answer does not find application at the outset of the Yucca Mountain proceeding. However, that phrase will not be surplusage once there are "other parties" in the proceeding. This provision will apply, however, to late-filed requests for hearing, petitions to intervene, and contentions.⁸

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⁶ Final Rule, Changes to Adjudicatory Process, 69 Fed. Reg. 2,182, 2,222 (Jan. 14, 2004) (emphasis added). *See also id.* at 2,203.

⁷ 10 C.F.R. § 2.309(h)(2).

⁸ 10 C.F.R.§ 2.309(h) imposes the requirements set forth in that section "[u]nless otherwise specified by the Commission, presiding officer, or the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board designated to rule on requests for hearings or petitions for leave to intervene." Based on the Statement of Considerations, this provision is intended only to allow some flexibility in the time periods provided to file answers and replies. 69 Fed. Reg. at 2,203 ("If there are special circumstances, the requestor/petitioner may request a short extension from the presiding officer.").

Finally, this proceeding promises to be one of the most complex proceedings ever adjudicated before the NRC. As the Commission has noted repeatedly, if a proceeding is, in fact, initiated on an application to construct a high-level waste repository on Yucca Mountain, it has the potential to be one of the most expansive proceedings in agency history. Under such circumstances, adding unnecessary elements – such as a multitude of answers by entities not even established as parties, as well as related replies – would simply be contrary to sound policy.

III. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing the Commission should:

- (1) provide 50 and 14 day periods for the filing of answers and replies, respectively, pursuant to 10 C.F.R. §§ 2.309(h)(1) and (2), but limited to the initial intervention stage; and
- (2) specifically note that, pursuant to the regulations, only DOE and the NRC Staff are entitled to file answers to petitions and contentions at that point.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁹ See U.S. Department of Energy (High-Level Repository: Pre-Application Matters) CLI-08-18, 68 NRC __ (slip op. at 4-5 August 13, 2008).

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BEFORE THE PRE-LICENSE APPLICATION PRESIDING OFFICER BOARD

In the Matter of)	Docket No. PAPO-00
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY)	ASLBP No. 04-829-01-PAPO
(High Level Waste Repository:)	
Pre-Application Matters))	
)	

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that the foregoing "The Nuclear Energy Institute's Comments in Response to Commission's August 13, 2008 Memorandum and Order" dated August 25, 2008, has been served on the following persons via the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Electronic Information Exchange (EIE) this 25th day of August, 2008:

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