

Rulemaking Comments

From: eyecons [eyecons@jps.net]
Sent: Monday, February 02, 2009 2:03 PM
To: Rulemaking Comments
Subject: public confidence in the NRC

Re: 73 FR 197 -- 10/09/2008
Docket ID-2008-0482 and Docket ID-2008-0404

To Whom it may Concern:

Since the advent of nuclear energy we been told not to worry about the waste generated and that it was a wise thing to put those matters into the hands of those who "know about" such things. And so this very important aspect of atom-splitting energy production has been left to the "experts" who had vested financial interest in suppressing the actual impact of such methods of energy production. However, there is a reality that must be faced, and that is that we have not so far, since the advent of nuclear power plants over 50 years ago, discovered a "safe" or adequate means of disposing of nuclear waste.

Richard Lester, MIT professor of nuclear engineering and director of the Industrial Performance Center points out that "uncertainty over how to deal with spent fuel, which remains radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years, is one of the major obstacles to the construction of new plants. Thousands of spent fuel rods are now stored in secure pools or concrete casks located near nuclear plants, which is not considered a long-term solution. The administration has been pushing a plan to move all of the nation's spent fuel to a repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, but that facility is not scheduled to open until at least 2017. Many years and billions of dollars have gone into planning for the repository there, over the protests of Nevada residents, and success is still not assured. If the project fails, an alternative will be needed. And even if it succeeds, spent fuel will remain at nuclear power plants for decades before it can be removed"

From Wikipedia: Nuclear Energy

The most important waste stream from nuclear power plants is spent fuel. A large nuclear reactor produces 3 cubic metres (25–30 tonnes) of spent fuel each year... As of 2007, the United States had accumulated more than 50,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel from nuclear reactors. Underground storage at Yucca Mountain in U.S. has been proposed as permanent storage. After 10,000 years of radioactive decay, according to United States Environmental Protection Agency standards, the spent nuclear fuel will no longer pose a threat to public health and safety.

According to a 2007 story broadcast on 60 Minutes, nuclear power gives France the cleanest air of any industrialized country, and the cheapest electricity in all of Europe. France reprocesses its nuclear waste to reduce its mass and make more energy. However, the article continues, "Today we stock containers of waste because currently scientists don't know how to reduce or eliminate the toxicity..." Nuclear waste is an enormously difficult political problem which to date no country has solved. It is, in a sense, the Achilles heel of the nuclear industry ... "If France is unable to solve this issue," says Mandil, then "I do not see how we can continue our nuclear program." Further, reprocessing itself has its critics, such as the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Apparently there is a bit of discrepancy in how we are being led to review the "safety" of nuclear energy, and the utilization and storage of such terrible waste. At this point in time there are 435 nuclear reactors world-wide currently spewing out nuclear waste, with 29 more under construction. The united states tops the list with 150 currently operating plants and vessels. Right now we are giving a lot of lip service to the "global warming" issue. However, I have yet to see a single bit of public commentary that links the problem of nuclear waste with the potential it implies in this area of concern. It is as if we are blind to the correlation in our desire to have all of the energy we possibly can without noting the consequences of a given "solution." (I would like to make the notation here that the atom already supports every aspect of our system of life here – it is the basic "life unit" just as it is!) Also, we all know that water is going to be a major area of concern in the changing environmental and weather patterns, and it is obvious that water is a necessity and an extreme issue of concern in managing nuclear waste – especially in the hyper-critical short term – and we are not even blinking at the thousands of years (10,000 thousand seems conservative according to some studies) of ultimate danger of leakage and contamination!

NRC has repeatedly expressed its "confidence" in the eventual permanent "disposal" of radioactive waste -- however the expectation that "disposal" will prevent release of this material into our environment has so far not been supported by any

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proposed program. So yes, I definitely agree that public confidence in the NRC Would Be Strengthened By Nuclear Waste Realism and Compliance With the National Environmental Policy Act, and I definitely feel that the NRC should suspend all generation of atomic waste from new sources until a truly permanent program that is scientifically sound and rooted in a just and equitable siting/decision process is instituted.

Sincerely,
Cherilyn Naughton
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