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Notice of Public Workshop on a Potential Rulemaking for Safe Disposal of Unique Waste Streams Including Significant Quantities of Depleted Uranium

Comment On: NRC-2009-0257-0001

Public Workshop: Potential Rulemaking for Safe Disposal of Unique Waste Streams Including Significant Quantities of Depleted Uranium

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RULES AND DIRECTIVES
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General Comment

October 30, 2009

Chief, Rulemaking and Directives Branch
Division of Administrative Services
Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my concerns about your proposed rulemaking on depleted uranium.

1. Significant quantities of depleted uranium have a hazard comparable to transuranic waste; therefore, depleted uranium should not be allowed for disposal in a near-surface facility. i

Depleted uranium is a long-lived alpha emitter. In terms of its radiological hazard, it is similar to the transuranic isotopes. Transuranic wastes are currently disposed of at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP),

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thousands of feet below the Earth's surface. Deep burial of this kind affords greater stability and protection from potential disturbance of the waste over the many tens of thousands of years that it will be hazardous.

Given the similarity between significant amounts of depleted uranium and the transuranic isotopes, deep geologic disposal should be the minimum acceptable disposal for depleted uranium. I urge you to revise your proposed rulemaking to require deep geologic disposal of depleted uranium.

2. The proposed rule should examine the peak hazard from depleted uranium; shortening the "period of performance" will artificially lower the perceived hazard.

If your Agency continues to develop a rule for the near-surface disposal of depleted uranium, as is now envisioned, then the site-specific analysis required should have to examine the peak hazard posed by depleted uranium.

3. Current performance assessments showing disposal of depleted uranium is safe may not be adequate; disposal of additional significant quantities of depleted uranium should be suspended pending updates to performance assessments.

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