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November 1, 2009

Commissioner Dale Klein
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Correcting the Record: Spent Fuel Reprocessing on the Decline Worldwide

Dear Commissioner Klein,

I am writing to you in regard to a speech you gave on October 19, 2009 to the NEI International Uranium Fuel Seminar in Austin, Texas.

In your speech you made favorable comments about the costly and dirty spent fuel management method called reprocessing and said, according to your prepared remarks posted on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's website, that "Many of the world's nuclear nations are moving toward recycling, if they have not already done so."

I request that you now produce information to back up this statement or that you issue a public retraction of it. Additionally, your use of the term "recycling" is also problematic as reprocessing countries such as Japan and the United Kingdom have used reprocessing as a plutonium stockpiling program and very little of their accumulated stockpile is actually "recycled."

Given the NRC's role as a regulator and not a promoter, your incorrect statements give the appearance that you are promoting reprocessing.

As you well know, the world is moving away from reprocessing and the facts speak to this:

- 1) the United Kingdom's THORP commercial reprocessing facility has had severe operational problems over the past few years and is barely operable and the UK reuses none of the commercial plutonium now stockpiled at Sellafield, which has grown to around 100 metric tons;
- 2) the French reprocessing facility at La Hague has now finished the reprocessing of foreign spent fuel, meaning that all European countries which formerly shipped commercial spent fuel to the site have pulled out of reprocessing, and the French have amassed a stockpile of about 50 metric ton of weapons-usable commercial plutonium;
- 3) the \$20-billion Japanese reprocessing plant at Rokkasho, after two years of attempts, has not been able to start commercial operation due to various design problems,

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thankfully not adding to the existing Japanese plutonium stockpile of more than 35 metric tons, stored in Japan and Europe.

Given the large special interests that are pushing for reprocessing in the U.S., especially the state-owned French plutonium company Areva, it is essential that NRC officials accurately present the facts about reprocessing and not help promote a fantasy of what the pro-reprocessing special interests may desire.

While we await the announcement of Secretary of Energy's Chu's blue ribbon panel on waste management, I request that you stick to the facts about the controversial spent fuel management method known as reprocessing, which is on the decline worldwide.

Thank you very much for your attention to this letter and for correcting the record. I request that this letter, along with your correction, be placed in the NRC's digital library in order to be noted by the public striving for an open and honest discussion about reprocessing and spent fuel management.

Sincerely,



Tom Clements
Southeastern Nuclear Campaign Coordinator

cc:

Commissioner Jaczko

Commissioner Svinicki

✓ Annette Vietti-Cook, Secretary of the Commission

Eliot Brenner, Director, Office of Public Affairs

Michael Weber, Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards