

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

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BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

Judy Ridge  
President

May 12, 2010

Russell Jim, Manager  
Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Program  
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation  
P.O. Box 151, Fort Road  
Toppenish, WA 98948

Subject: COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION LICENSE RENEWAL AND USED NUCLEAR FUEL

Dear Mr. Jim,

This letter is in response to your April 9 letter to the Honorable Gregory B. Jaczko, Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Thank you for your interest and that of the Yakama Nation in Columbia Generating Station, and, specifically, the safety and security of the plant's used fuel. Please be assured Energy Northwest is fully committed to operating the plant to the nation's highest nuclear and industrial safety standards and to protecting our environment.

In your letter, you expressed concerns about how Energy Northwest stores used fuel from Columbia's reactor. We currently safely and securely store all used fuel from the past 25 years of operation onsite in either a specially designed, water-filled pool within our reactor building or at an independent spent fuel dry storage installation.

The pool, able to accommodate 2,654 fuel assemblies, was designed only as a temporary storage option until the Department of Energy fulfilled its legal obligation to transfer all used fuel generated in the U.S. to a permanent national repository. As you're aware, plans for such a repository are indefinitely delayed. Ultimately, as required by law, we hope DOE will centrally manage used fuel for all U.S. nuclear power plants fuel.

In the interim, Energy Northwest transfers used fuel that has been in Columbia's used fuel pool for five or more years to onsite, NRC-approved, above ground, heavy steel and concrete dry casks. Built in 2001-2002, Columbia's ISFSI dry cask storage project accommodates longer onsite storage of used fuel. The total number of casks currently stored on two pads is 27. We will add nine more casks in 2014. Each cask can hold up to 68 fuel assemblies. All of the used fuel stored in Columbia's ISFSI site containers could fit inside a building the size of a typical convenience store.

The used fuel storage pad provides safe and secure dry canister storage of Columbia's used fuel. The containers are designed and tested to ensure they prevent the release of radioactivity, even under the most extreme conditions – earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods and sabotage. The casks use natural circulation cooling and require no mechanical devices. Energy Northwest's highly trained security force constantly monitors the storage area and the entire nuclear facility.

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Your letter also expressed some concerns about the structural integrity of the spent fuel pool. The pool is located adjacent to the reactor. Both facilities were designed to withstand extreme conditions, such as earthquakes and tornadoes. Both are built with steel-reinforced concrete.

Separate and independent studies sponsored by the NRC and the Nuclear Energy Institute have determined the primary structures of a nuclear plant – including used fuel storage pools and the 225-ton steel-and-concrete fuel dry storage containers – would withstand the impact of a wide-body commercial airliner in a 9/11-type scenario. The studies also concluded the fuel would remain protected. The NRC has called U.S. nuclear generating plants the most secure facilities in the world.

Energy Northwest is committed to open and frequent communication to ensure the public is aware of our intentions and actions during the license renewal process. I have included a brochure and fact sheet on the license renewal process for your information.

I would also like to extend an offer for you and Yakama Nation representatives to tour Columbia Generating Station at your convenience to see first hand how we manage this significant regional energy asset and how we store used fuel. To arrange the tour or receive further information on Columbia, please contact our Public Affairs Manager, Rochelle Olson, at 509-377-4728.

Respectfully,



Judy Ridge  
President

cc: Energy Northwest Board of Directors  
Yakama Nation Radioactive and Hazardous Waste Committee  
Philip Rigdon, Deputy Director, Yakama Nation Department of Natural Resources