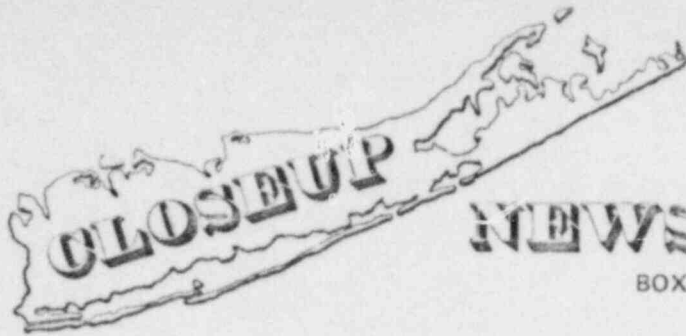


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October 25, 1980

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT REQUEST

Freedom of Information Act Officer
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C.

FOIA-80-539
rec'd 11-3-80

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to the U.S. Freedom of Information Act,
kindly send me the specifics and map of routes for the
transportation of spent nuclear fuel, as noted in the
enclosed article in The New York Times.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Karl Grossman

KG/1f

8011070623

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FOI

New York, New Jersey, Connecticut

N. R. C. Releases the Routes For Shipping Nuclear Waste

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24 — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today announced the routes that spent nuclear fuel would be transported on following its use in reactors.

In some cases — such as those involving Trenton, Syracuse, Sacramento, Calif., and Columbus, Ohio — the route takes a detour around a heavily populated city. In other cases — involving such cities as Hartford, Nashville and Williamsport, Pa. — the route goes directly through or next to the city.

In explaining why the latter route was sometimes chosen, Robert F. Burnett, director of safeguards of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said: "In some cases, it's almost impossible to stay out of it. In a detour, you would pass more people than if you went right through a city."

There are no routes through New York City, and Mr. Burnett said that this was so because, although there are uses and proposed uses of nuclear fuel in the area, there are no applications pending to pass through the city.

The routing of the shipments through populated areas has been a matter of dispute for years between local and Federal officials.

Safety Threats Denied

Some cities, including New York City, have barred such shipments on the ground that they are a threat to heavily populated areas. The commission has responded that the shipments were made carefully and did not present such threats, and it repeated those assertions in releasing the route designations today.

Mr. Burnett said the routes had been selected by the shippers of the spent fuel and approved piecemeal by the commission's staff over the last year. They were released today in response to inquiries.

At first, Mr. Burnett said, the commission had resisted making the route designations available to the public. "This office did not feel we should release them because it would assist terrorists," Mr. Burnett said.

However, Congress passed a law asserting the public's right to know the routes, and Mr. Burnett said that security against possible terrorist attacks could

continue to be maintained because the commission was permitted to retain secrecy over the time the shipments would be made.

The material that is sent to the plants is low in radioactivity and presents no danger, Mr. Burnett said, and is not subject to the route designations.

300 Shipments a Year

After the fission process, however, the material is highly radioactive and contains many potentially lethal components, such as plutonium.

That material, the commission insisted in a statement today, was being shipped under the greatest safety precautions. Mr. Burnett said that 300 such shipments in heavy, lead-lined casks were made each year, all without injury.

"Thus far, success of the packaging strategy has been demonstrated despite an occasional violent traffic accident," the commission said. "For example, one such accident occurred on Dec. 8, 1970, on a major highway near Oak Ridge, Tenn.

"In this accident, the driver of a vehicle carrying a spent fuel cask swerved to avoid colliding with an oncoming vehicle, lost control and overturned on the roadway. The cask assembly was thrown into a ditch, traveling more than 100 feet before coming to rest.

"No release of contents or release of radiation occurred. The outer surface of the cask suffered minor damage. The cask was recovered and subsequently returned to service after repairs."

The report did not indicate what happened to the driver.

Among those who have opposed shipping nuclear waste through highly populated areas is Dr. Leonard S. Solon, the director of New York City's Bureau for Radiation Control, who said that it represented an "unacceptable public health hazard."

Confrontation Inevitable

Representative Theodore Weiss, Democrat of Manhattan, has proposed legislation that would prohibit the shipment of such materials through cities.

Routes Are Released For Shipping Wastes After Nuclear Fission

Continued From Page 25

The legislation has not advanced far, however.

A confrontation over shipping through New York City has been delayed, but it cannot be put off forever. The Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, L.I., is storing spent fuel from its reactor on its property, but Mr. Burnett said that Brookhaven had a limited storage capacity for the material.

In addition, the Long Island Lighting Company plans to open its nuclear power plant in Shoreham, L.I., early in 1983 and it, too, will have a storage capacity of only five years' worth of spent fuel.

"There are 73 operating nuclear reactors in the United States and each will have to move fuel at one time or another," said Mr. Burnett of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The 300 annual shipments, Mr. Burnett said, included fuel from those reactors, and there are also about 50 shipments each year from foreign countries.

These shipments consist of spent nuclear fuel of weapons grade that must be returned to the United States, which had supplied so-called new fuel to the countries.

The foreign shipments arrive at Portsmouth, Va., and are taken to Interstate Route 95 for the trip to nuclear storage sites in Savannah River and Barnwell, S.C. Other storage sites are in Morris, Ill., and Hanford, Wash., Mr. Burnett said.