



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

September 15, 2020

The Honorable Tom Udall
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your August 18, 2020, letter urging the Commission to pause its timeline for finalizing the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Holtec International's proposed consolidated interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel in Lea County until the NRC is able to safely hold in-person meetings in New Mexico. You also expressed opposition to the NRC staff's decision to hold a series of webinars instead of in-person meetings to gather comments from the public on the draft EIS.

For the proposed consolidated interim storage site in Lea County, the NRC staff held five in-person public meetings in New Mexico and a supplementary webinar during the scoping process for the environmental review. As you note in your letter, the NRC staff had initially planned to hold an additional five in-person public meetings in New Mexico and a nationwide webinar during the public comment period for the draft EIS. Given the COVID-19 public health emergency, the staff has extended the comment period, originally set to close on May 22, 2020, until September 22, 2020. The continuing public health emergency and guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also led the NRC staff to re-evaluate its original plan for how to engage the public on the draft EIS. To protect the health and well-being of the public while still hearing from interested stakeholders, the NRC staff made the difficult decision to hold a series of six webinars on the draft EIS. Members of the public are also able to submit comments on the draft EIS through September 22, 2020, via email, the Federal Rulemaking website (<https://www.regulations.gov>), and letters to the NRC. In addition, the NRC staff continues to engage remotely with State, local, and Tribal government officials. These actions will allow the staff to continue its public outreach during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

I appreciate your ongoing interest in this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Eugene Dacus, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

Kristine L. Svinicki

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable Tom Udall
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510