

Rep. Markey

QUESTION 1:

Messrs. Charles Kay, Thomas Hindman, Hugh Thompson and Alan Roberts, in the past there have been problems over notification of and consultation with States through which class C or route-controlled quantities of nuclear material have been transported. Will any of these transportation bills pending before the Committee strengthen these requirements, and, if so, why should we think you will do a better job of notification and consultation in the future?

ANSWER:

NRC has not identified specific problems with its present advance notification procedures. To aid in State emergency planning, Congress directed in 1980 that the NRC require advance notice to the states of scheduled shipments of high level nuclear waste and spent fuel. NRC licensees who transport large quantities of high level radioactive waste or spent fuel are required to notify the Governor (or the Governor's designee) in each State through which shipment is planned. In general, for spent fuel shipments the required notification must be made seven days prior to departure. The Governor's office determines who in each State should have access to the scheduling information. The notification

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includes the planned route and schedules, shipment description, and the carrier's name and address.

As a security measure, the NRC further restricts disclosure to the public of scheduling information for spent fuel shipments until 10 days after the shipment, or the last shipment in a series reaches its destination.

The bills before the Committee would require the NRC to make various additional notifications to the chief officials of any political subdivision of a State and of an Indian tribe regarding the transport of high level radioactive waste and Class C waste, including receipt of an application to transport and advance notification for specific shipments. Studies on risk associated with the transportation of radioactive waste indicate that the risk is small and with the current notification process, the NRC does not believe that additional notification would result in any improvement in the protecting of public health and safety. With respect to spent fuel shipments, the NRC believes that additional dissemination of shipment information through expanded notifications to local municipalities and others in some cases could potentially impact the security of the shipments without any corresponding benefit.