



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

October 15, 1999

Dear Invited Guest:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) Spent Fuel Project Office is initiating a study on spent nuclear fuel cask responses to severe transportation accidents. NRC would like to inform you of the study and invite you to two public meetings that will launch the study.

NRC previously studied cask response to severe transportation accidents in the 1980s (see NUREG/CR-4829 and NUREG/BR-0111, called the 'modal study'). The modal study looked at possible rail and highway accidents and concluded that spent nuclear fuel cask designs would survive nearly all transportation accidents without releasing radioactive material to the environment. About 1300 shipments of spent nuclear fuel have been made in NRC-certified packages, with an exceptional safety record of no releases from accidents. However, a near-term increase in the number of shipments is likely, and this has focused increased attention on spent nuclear fuel shipment safety. Despite the previous studies and very good safety record, some stakeholders have questions or concerns regarding spent nuclear fuel transport package safety.

NRC used the original modal study as part of the evidence that NRC's regulatory approach and requirements in 10 CFR Part 71 are sufficient to provide for adequate protection of public health and safety. The results of the modal study are often used in documents that support NRC decisions including environmental impact statements that deal with the risk of accidents during spent fuel transportation.

Over the next few years we will revisit the conclusions of the 1987 modal study to assure their continued validity. Risk insights obtained using modern analysis techniques, physical testing, and through interaction with stakeholders and the public, will support NRC's ongoing efforts to assure that its regulatory actions are risk-informed and effective. Ongoing public interactions throughout this project will help ensure that public concerns are effectively identified and understood, and that the project is designed considering these issues.

As the first step, NRC will conduct public meetings with the goal of having open, constructive discussions by stakeholders so that we can listen to and better understand any public concerns regarding spent nuclear fuel transport package safety. Information obtained will be used to further develop this project. The first meeting will be held on November 17, 1999, at the Bethesda Hyatt Hotel, One Bethesda Metro (7400 Wisconsin Avenue), Bethesda, MD, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. A second meeting will be held on December 8, 1999, at the Henderson Convention Center, 200 Water Street, Henderson, NV, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The public meetings will be conducted in a "roundtable" format. In order to have a manageable discussion, the number of participants around the table will, of necessity, be limited. NRC, through the facilitator for the meeting, will attempt to ensure participation by the broad spectrum of interests at the meeting, including citizen and environmental groups, nuclear industry interests, state, tribal, and local governments, experts from academia, or other agencies. Other members of the public are welcome to attend, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on each agenda item to be discussed by the roundtable participants.

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A World Wide Web site has been established for dissemination of project information to the stakeholders and interested members of the public. This site can be found at <http://ttd.sandia.gov/nrc/modal.htm>. Additional information on the public meetings can currently be found on the NRC's site, <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/PUBLIC/meet.html>, or by calling Mr. Robert Lewis on (301) 415-8527.

Enclosed for your reference in preparing for these meetings is a copy of the meeting agenda and a copy of NUREG/BR-0111.

Sincerely,



E. William Brach, Director
Spent Fuel Project Office
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Enclosures: 1. Meeting Agenda
2. NUREG/BR-0111

MEETING AGENDA

Introductions and Welcome

E. William Brach, Director, Spent Fuel Project Office, NRC

Susan F. Shankman, Deputy Director, Spent Fuel Project Office, NRC

Ground Rules, Agenda Overview, Introduction of Participants

Francis X. Cameron, Facilitator

Overview of NRC Studies on Transportation Risk

NRC Staff

NRC Plans for the Modal Study Update

Robert Lewis, NRC

General Overview of the Study Updates

Sandia National Laboratories

Discussion of Issues

Participants and Audience

Summary and Closing Remarks

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* See previous concurrences on following page.

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