

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

NRC to Hold Public Meetings on Spent Fuel Shipping Cask Accident Studies

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting on spent nuclear fuel transportation studies.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is initiating a study on spent nuclear fuel cask responses to severe transportation accidents. NRC previously studied this issue 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. Over the next few years NRC 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 general public with the goal of having open, constructive discussions by stakeholders so that the NRC can listen to and better understand any public concerns regarding spent nuclear fuel transport package safety. Francis X. Cameron, Special Counsel for Public Liaison, in the

Commission's Office of the General Counsel, will be the convenor and facilitator for the meetings.

DATES: Two public meetings will be held. The first will be held in Bethesda, MD, on November 17, 1999, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The second will be held in Henderson, NV, on December 8, 1999, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with an evening session from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The location of the first meeting is the Bethesda Hyatt Hotel, One Bethesda Metro (7400 Wisconsin Avenue), Bethesda, MD. The second meeting will be held at the Henderson Convention Center, 200 Water Street, Henderson, NV.

INFORMATION: Contact Francis X. Cameron, Special Counsel for Public Liaison, Office of the General Counsel, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington DC, 20555-0001, Telephone: 301-415-1642.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The risk of transporting highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel from nuclear power plants to a centralized storage facility or to an underground repository is an issue that has recently received increased NRC and public attention because of the increase in the number of shipments that will occur if and when such facilities begin operating. Risk to the public from transportation accidents depends on accident rates, number of shipments, and the likely consequences and severity of the accidents. About 1300 shipments of spent nuclear fuel have been made in NRC-certified packages, with an exceptional safety record of no releases from accidents. Despite the previous studies and safety record, some stakeholders may have questions

or concerns regarding spent nuclear fuel transport package safety. Several groups have criticized NRC's cask standards and the modal study as being insufficient to adequately demonstrate safety during severe transportation accidents.

The objective of the public meetings is to bring together representatives of the interests affected by the study to discuss their views on the issues in a "roundtable" format. In order to have a manageable discussion, the number of participants around the table will, of necessity, be limited. The Commission, through the facilitator for the meeting, will attempt to ensure participation by the broad spectrum of interests at the meetings, 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 of the agenda items slated for discussion by the roundtable participants. Questions about participation may be directed to the facilitator, Francis X. Cameron.

The meetings will have a pre-defined scope and agenda focused on the major technical issues in regard to spent nuclear fuel cask performance during transportation accidents. However, the meeting format will be sufficiently flexible to allow for the introduction of additional related issues that the participants may wish to raise. The purpose of the meetings is to hear the views of the participants on the issues and options to resolve the issues for the forthcoming study. The agenda for the meetings is set forth below.

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

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 14th day of October 1999.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY S/

Susan F. Shankman, Deputy Director
 Licensing and Inspection Directorate
 Spent Fuel Project Office
 Office of Nuclear Material Safety
 and Safeguards

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* See previous concurrence on next pages.