

Public Concerns about “Low-Level” Radioactive Waste

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NRC Commissioners' Briefing

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GOALS for “Low-Level” Radioactive Waste Management and Disposal

- Isolation from Public and Environment
- Preventing Exposures/Doses
- Minimize production, transport, handling

Concerns re:10 CFR 61

- Not protective enough now
 - Long-lasting waste can be buried
 - 100 year institutional control period is shorter than waste remains radioactively hazardous
 - Allowable leak rate
- Proposed changes being considered could be even LESS protective
 - “Risk informing” is seen as a threat to public and environment when NRC continues to deny radiation health risks.

Definition of “Low-Level” Radioactive Waste in the US

- 10 CFR 61.55 designates Classes A, B, C and Greater-Than-Class-C (GTCC) based on reactor radionuclide concentrations. Anything not listed is automatically Class A—which includes long-lasting radionuclides.

Concerns include

- Disagreement with NRC assumption that Classes A, B and C are only hazardous for 100, 300 and 500 years
- Opposition to creation of a new class of Very Low Level Waste or Below Class A or other de-minimis category (the old BRC)
- Classification of Depleted Uranium as Class A

Texas Waste Site

Texas legislators have requested investigations into

- TCEQ's handling of concerns that caused several TCEQ technical staff reviewing the WCS license application to quit
- TCEQ Commissioners' decision to deny the requested contested case hearing

Local public has concerns regarding WCS paying for an upcoming election on a \$75 million bond to pay for the site, which is owned by a billionaire

Lack of clarity on authorized time allowed for radioactive waste storage at the WCS site

IMPORT/EXPORT

- Public disclosure is completely inadequate
- Public opposes import of foreign radioactive waste for processing and/or disposal and/or “recycling.” Support federal legislation.
- Tennessee, South Carolina, Louisiana, Southeast and National organizations requested public adjudicatory hearing in middle TN on EnergySolutions’ proposed import of Italy’s waste
- Utah and Northwest Compact oppose Italy import

Serious Concern re: Private Processors Taking Title to Nuclear Waste

- Tennesseans are just learning about the:
Secret changes their Agreement State agency, TN
Department of Environment and Conservation,
has made allowing private processors to take
title and liability to nuclear waste from across
the country and around the world;
- Contracts to bring Class B and C reactor waste to
Tennessee where Studsvik takes title to it and
becomes the “generator”
- Experiments diluting or down-blending higher
concentration waste so it can meet acceptance
limits at EnergySolutions’ waste site in UT

ONSITE STORAGE

No public records are available of LLRW generated or stored onsite at nuclear power reactor sites.

Minimal public input has been sought or taken on site specific and national policy decisions on onsite llrw storage. Waste generators drive the discussion.

In absence of licensed disposal, sites of reactors (and processors that take waste title and ownership) could become de-facto permanent nuclear waste sites. This must be considered in license extension and new license decisions.

Deregulating Nuclear Waste is **UNACCEPTABLE**

- Reclassifying nuclear waste as not radioactive, very low level, BSFR or other term is a set up to let it out of regulatory control.
- Solid and Hazardous waste sites are not designed to isolate long-lasting nuclear waste. Liners have a 30-year design life. It is unacceptable to send nuclear power and weapons waste, even if dubbed very low level, to sites not regulated or controlled for man-made radioactivity.
- Synergistic effects are not included in any radiation protection standards. Burial near hazardous wastes could result in exposures to multiple biological stressors.
- Neither restricted nor unrestricted release of radioactive waste for “recycling” is protective enough for the public, recycling workers or environment.

Thank you for including our perspective in today's briefing.

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