

Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors

The following principles are based on the urgent need to protect the public from the threats posed by the current vulnerable storage of commercial irradiated fuel. The United States does not have a near-term solution for the permanent storage of high-level nuclear waste. The proposed Yucca Mountain site is unsafe for geologic storage of nuclear waste and the program remains mired in bad science, mismanagement, and yet another design overhaul. Even if licensed, Yucca Mountain could not legally contain all of the waste produced by existing reactors. Under the U.S. Department of Energy's unrealistically optimistic scenario, Yucca Mountain is not predicted to begin receiving waste until at least 2017 and transporting waste to the site would take more than 30 years. Meanwhile, irradiated fuel at reactor sites remains vulnerable to accidents and attacks.

The undersigned organizations' support for improving the protection of radioactive waste stored at reactor sites is a matter of security and is in no way an indication that we support nuclear power and the generation of more nuclear waste.

- ◆ **Require a low-density, open-frame layout for fuel pools:** Fuel pools were originally designed for temporary storage of a limited number of irradiated fuel assemblies in a low density, open frame configuration. As the amount of waste generated has increased beyond the designed capacity, the pools have been reorganized so that the concentration of fuel in the pools is nearly the same as that in operating reactor cores. If water is lost from a densely packed pool as the result of an attack or an accident, cooling by ambient air would likely be insufficient to prevent a fire, resulting in the release of large quantities of radioactivity to the environment. A low-density, open-frame arrangement within fuel pools could allow enough air circulation to keep the fuel from catching fire. In order to achieve and maintain this arrangement within the pools, irradiated fuel must be transferred from the pools to dry storage within five years of being discharged from the reactor.
- ◆ **Establish hardened on-site storage (HOSS):** Irradiated fuel must be stored as safely as possible as close to the site of generation as possible. Waste moved from fuel pools must be safeguarded in hardened, on-site storage (HOSS) facilities. Transporting waste to interim away-from-reactor storage should not be done unless the reactor site is unsuitable for a HOSS facility and the move increases the safety and security of the waste. HOSS facilities must not be regarded as a permanent waste solution, and thus should not be constructed deep underground. The waste must be retrievable, and real-time radiation and heat monitoring at the HOSS facility must be implemented for early detection of radiation releases and overheating. The overall objective of HOSS should be that the amount of releases projected in even severe attacks should be low enough that the storage system would be unattractive as a terrorist target. Design criteria that would correspond to the overall objective must include:
 - Resistance to severe attacks, such as a direct hit by high-explosive or deeply penetrating weapons and munitions or a direct hit by a large aircraft loaded with fuel or a small aircraft loaded with fuel and/or explosives, without major releases.
 - Placement of individual canisters that makes detection difficult from outside the site boundary.

- ◆ **Protect fuel pools:** Irradiated fuel must be kept in pools for several years before it can be stored in a dry facility. The pools must be protected to withstand an attack by air, land, or water from a force at least equal in size and coordination to the 9/11 attacks. The security improvements must be approved by a panel of experts independent of the nuclear industry and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
- ◆ **Require periodic review of HOSS facilities and fuel pools:** An annual report consisting of the review of each HOSS facility and fuel pool should be prepared with meaningful participation from public stakeholders, regulators, and utility managers at each site. The report must be made publicly available and may include recommendations for actions to be taken.
- ◆ **Dedicate funding to local and state governments to independently monitor the sites:** Funding for monitoring the HOSS facilities at each site must be provided to affected local and state governments. The affected public must have the right to fully participate.
- ◆ **Prohibit reprocessing:** The reprocessing of irradiated fuel has not solved the nuclear waste problem in any country, and actually exacerbates it by creating numerous additional waste streams that must be managed. In addition to being expensive and polluting, reprocessing also increases nuclear weapons proliferation threats.

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