

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 and update to previous notice of public meeting (64 FR 56525).

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. 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 study design considers these issues.

NRC will conduct a public meeting on this topic in Henderson, Nevada, on December 8, 1999. This meeting was noticed at 64 FR 56525 along with a November 17, 1999, meeting in Bethesda, Maryland. Based on the lessons learned in Bethesda and discussions with stakeholders, the agenda for Henderson has been revised and an additional seminar session (similar to the Henderson evening seminar) has been scheduled for December 9, 1999, in Pahrump, Nevada.

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: The meeting will be: (1) in Henderson, NV, on December 8, 1999, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; followed by (2) an evening seminar in the same room from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.; and (3) a seminar in Pahrump, NV, on December 9, 1999, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

ADDRESSES: On December 8, all meetings will be in the Grand Ballroom at the Henderson Convention Center, 200 Water Street, Henderson, NV. On December 9, the meeting will be held at the Mountain View Casino and Bowl,

1750 Pahrump Valley Road, Pahrump, 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 risks from accidents while 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.

During the morning and afternoon of December 8 in Henderson, representatives of the interests affected by the study will 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.

On December 8 in Henderson, and on December 9 in Pahrump, seminars will be conducted. At these seminars, the NRC staff will briefly present the NRC's role in ensuring transportation safety and its views regarding the upcoming study. A moderated discussion will then be held to discuss the study's proposed content or approach with those in the

audience. The NRC staff will then be available to further discuss issues or public concerns regarding transportation safety.

The meeting and seminars 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 and seminars is to hear the views of the participants on the issues and options to resolve the issues for the forthcoming study. The agenda is set forth below.

Roundtable Meeting, December 8, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Henderson, NV

Introductions and Ground Rules
Welcome and Overview
NRC Spent Fuel Transportation Studies
Use of Physical Testing and Computer Simulation
Roundtable Discussion; Audience Comments
Highway and Railway Accidents
Likelihoods
Roundtable Discussion; Audience Comments
Container Performance During Collisions and Fires
Roundtable Discussion; Audience Comments
Spent Nuclear Fuel Assembly Behavior in Accidents
Roundtable Discussion; Audience Comments
Other Transportation Safety Issues
Roundtable Discussion; Audience Comments
Wrap-up and Adjourn

Seminars, December 8, 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Henderson, NV and December 9, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Pahrump, NV

Welcome and Overview
NRC Role and Regulatory Framework
NRC Spent Fuel Transportation Studies
Overview of Upcoming Study
Discussion Forum
Wrap-up and Adjourn

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 26th day of November 1999.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

M. Wayne Hodges,
*Deputy Director, Technical Review
Directorate, Spent Fuel Project Office, Office
of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards.*
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