



THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS
EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Managing the Back-End of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle

The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
The Council of State Governments—ERC
NE High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Task Force

Public Meeting; Boston, MA – October 12, 2011

Northeast High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Project

Cort Richardson, Director



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NE High-Level Radioactive Waste Task Force

- Representatives from eleven northeast states (New England plus NY, PA, NJ, and DE)
- Governor-appointed representatives from executive branch agencies including emergency management, environmental protection, radiation health, utility regulation, public safety and transportation departments and liaisons with state legislatures
- Meets 2x annually w/Project staff, federal agencies, tribes and other stakeholders
- Provides input to federal policy & program develop



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**Preliminary Response to
Blue Ribbon Commission
Draft Report – July 29, 2011**

Section 5.6 - Transportation Issues



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1. The draft report cites a 2006 National Academies Study (NAS) on the transportation of SNF and HLW as concluding that there are “no fundamental technical barriers” to safe transport and finds that while concerns are cited most have been resolved and others should be “addressed as appropriate.”
 - We agree with the Commission’s general conclusion that SNF and HLW can be transported safely and securely but we believe that the draft report is too optimistic and dismissive about the progress that has been made in addressing technical concerns and the seriousness of the remaining unresolved issues. Some examples follow.



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- The NAS study provides findings and recommendations on various issues related to SNF and HLW transportation system operations:
 1. Mode for transporting fuel
 2. Route selection
 3. Use of dedicated trains
 4. Acceptance order
 5. Emergency response training and planning
 6. Information sharing and openness



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- The preferred mode for transporting SNF/HLW is a mostly rail scenario. That policy has been adopted by federal regulators including DOE and DOT/FRA. The NAS study lists the following supporting points:
 - Total number of shipments reduced by factor of five reducing public radiological exposure and accidents;
 - Greater separation from other vehicular traffic and interactions with the public;
 - More efficient operational logistics;
 - Clear public preference.
- NAS rejected reliance on trucks to transport SNF/HLW & strongly recommended reducing inter-modal shipments



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- NAS warned that rail line abandonment and decaying infrastructure near SNF and HLW storage sites could significantly curtail rail access, citing 1992 DOE studies.
- As we have seen, the situation is far worse than reported
- Not only has the infrastructure declined significantly but the rail rolling stock needed to efficiently bear the enormous weights involved the shipping campaign has not been developed and the capacity of current rail lines to accommodate the dimensions of the equipment is doubtful
- At this point a complex program with major reliance on trucks and inter-modal shipments would be required to move the material to interim storage or disposal facilities



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Other issues:

- Commission priority for promoting stakeholder engagement and funding technical assistance and training has been undermined by DOE's response to Yucca Mt. project cancellation and congressional budget cuts; the stakeholder program is declining
- Emergency Response training programs for radiological shipments have been cut back
- Route selection process is suspended



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Recommendations:

- Planning and coordination for the national SNF and HLW transportation program needs to start up again now, not later
- The Commission should elevate transportation concerns to a more prominent position in the Report and qualify its optimism to reflect more realistic findings that emphasize the serious challenges that exist
- A major study of near site transportation focusing on rail infrastructure conditions and needs, prioritizing first in-line facilities, should be undertaken immediately.



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QUESTIONS?