

Plutonium Fuel Factory Public Meetings

Tuesday, September 17, 2002 North Augusta Community Center
495 Brookside Avenue North Augusta, SC 29861

Wednesday, September 18, 2002 Coastal Georgia Center
305 Fahm Street Savannah, GA 31401

Thursday, September 19, 2002 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
600 East Fourth Street Charlotte, NC 28202

The United States Plutonium Disposition Program is a billion dollar boondoggle: managed for failure and characterized by deception. The government's decision to cancel the Plutonium Immobilization Program left the Department of Energy with a single means--*plutonium fuel*--for long-term surplus plutonium management, an option with complications, cost increases, and technical difficulties. (for more information go to <http://www.BREDL.org/sapc>)

In July Duke Cogema Stone and Webster (DCS) submitted a revised environmental report to support their request to build a plutonium fuel factory at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold these three meetings to discuss recent environmental information.

All Meetings begin at 7:00 PM and end at 10:00 PM

Plutonium Fuel: The Problems Mount

The US Department of Energy's plutonium fuel testing program would require tens of thousands of miles of national and international shipments of the radioactive material.

▶ Shipping 115 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium, enough for 50 nuclear bombs, on the high seas is an invitation to disaster.

The plutonium fuel program is filled with uncertainties and inherently flawed by political, technical, and regulatory complexities as well as excess transportation requirements.

▶ Los Alamos National Labs fabrication of test fuel assemblies is one year behind schedule.

▶ Both Duke Power, who's McGuire and Catawba reactors are slated for plutonium fuel use, and DOE have claimed plutonium fuel is a "swords-into-plowshares" program. But technical problems and delays may force DOE to use British military plutonium instead of dismantled warheads from the United States to fabricate the first test fuel assemblies.

The DOE's frequent changes in this program involve continued violations of the National Environmental Policy Act's provisions for timely public notification.

▶ Duke Cogema Stone and Webster withheld important information in documents it submitted to the NRC in support of its efforts to license plutonium (MOX) fuel use in Duke reactors

▶ The US DOE may have issued a false Record of Decision in January 2000 by stating that Los Alamos was its choice for test assembly fabrication.

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League believes that the toxic legacy of the Cold War should not be transmuted into a plutonium-fueled economy.

The Department of Energy's plutonium program would not reduce the threat to international security from theft or diversion; the danger is in the potential for proliferation of nuclear weapons and for environmental, safety and health consequences if dismantled warhead materials are not properly managed.

Our goal is to prevent Southeast from becoming the proving ground for plutonium-fueled electric power and the cradle of a new arms race.

It is time to demand that the plutonium fuel program be cancelled once and for all.

The US Department of Energy (DOE) and its contractor Duke, Cogema, Stone and Webster (DCS) may have to use British military plutonium instead of U.S. surplus plutonium. A March 2001 foreign trip report by a DCS manager who identified the probable source as the British Ministry of Defense, stated that in the U.S. there was "lack of adequate material from the 34 metric tonnes declared excess."¹

Plutonium oxide purification at Los Alamos National laboratory, a process necessary for the fabrication of plutonium fuel, suffered repeated failures and equipment problems.²

One or more transatlantic shipments of purified, deadly plutonium oxide powder must occur from Los Alamos, New Mexico to Belgium for manufacturing plutonium fuel lead test assemblies (LTAs). This would involve a total of 115 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium--enough to build more than 50 nuclear weapons.

Transatlantic shipment of four plutonium fuel assemblies would be needed from Belgium to McGuire Nuclear Power Plant near Charlotte, North Carolina for irradiation.

Plutonium fuel "scrap" produced during fabrication would return to the U.S. to an undetermined location.

Irradiated MOX fuel assemblies would be shipped to Oak Ridge National Laboratory for post irradiation examination.

1. Lawrence Losh. Framatome ANP. *Foreign Travel Trip Report*. Report Date March 4, 2001, for Travel to Bristol Abbey Wood, United Kingdom on 2/27/01 to 3/3/01. Obtained by BREDL through FOIA.

2. For more information, see January 23, 2001 letter to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) at http://www.bredl.org/sapc/CNSC_letter012301.htm

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