

# Stop Plutonium Fuel

In the 1970's the United States banned the use of plutonium in commercial nuclear power plants due to the risk that the plutonium could be diverted to terrorists and to nations that have not renounced the use of nuclear weapons.

But on January 4, 2000 the US Department of Energy issued a decision to reprocess up to 50 metric tons of plutonium from dismantled weapons at Savannah River Site in South Carolina. The latest cost estimate for the fuel project is \$3.2 Billion. A safer alternative to the plutonium fuel project, plutonium immobilization, which is the encasement of plutonium in glass logs, was officially cancelled and de-funded by DOE in 2002. Cost estimates for immobilization were \$1.5 Billion.

The Department of Energy's program is now a dangerous billion dollar boondoggle. The government's decisions leave a single method--*plutonium fuel*--for disposing of dismantled nuclear weapons. A serious accident at a nuclear power plant using plutonium fuel would result in greater death and disease in the surrounding communities. For more information go to <http://www.BREDL.org/sapc>

## Duke Energy Plans to Test Plutonium Fuel at Catawba in 2005

**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 problems if dismantled warhead materials are not properly managed.**

**We must prevent South Carolina from becoming the proving ground for plutonium-fueled electric power and the cradle of a new arms race.**

January 2004

## BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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# **The plutonium fuel program is inherently flawed by political, technical, and regulatory complexities as well as risky transportation requirements**

**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.**

► Los Alamos National Labs fabrication of test fuel assemblies is behind schedule. Plutonium oxide purification at Los Alamos National laboratory, a process necessary for the fabrication of plutonium fuel, suffered repeated failures and equipment problems. For more information on this, see January 23, 2001 letter to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission at:

[http://www.BREDL.org/sapc/CNSC\\_letter012301.htm](http://www.BREDL.org/sapc/CNSC_letter012301.htm)

► One or more transatlantic shipments of purified, deadly plutonium oxide powder will go from Los Alamos, New Mexico to Europe 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 Europe to Catawba Nuclear Power Station near Rock Hill, North Carolina for irradiation.

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

► Irradiated plutonium fuel assemblies would be shipped from Catawba to Oak Ridge National Laboratory for post irradiation examination.

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

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

To find out how you can help, contact:

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