

VEERMAN

EIS000991



RECEIVED

JAN 20 2000

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Yucca Mountain Repository

Statement by Chief Gordon L. Veerman

presented to

United States Department of Energy

St. Louis, MO

January 20, 2000

International Association of Fire Chiefs
4025 Fair Ridge Drive • Fairfax, VA 22033-2868

Good morning, members of the panel, I am Gordon Veerman, chief of the fire department at the Argonne National Laboratory located in Argonne, Illinois. I am also a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs and appear today on behalf of that organization. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is a professional association founded over 125 years ago to provide chief fire officers and managers of emergency service organizations throughout the international community with information, education, services and representation in the effort to protect citizens from the devastation of fire and other emergencies.

Spent nuclear fuel has been accumulating and temporarily stockpiled since 1982 at approximately 73 nuclear power plant locations throughout the United States. The stockpiling of nuclear waste in so many widespread locales, renders them vulnerable to potential sabotage and terrorist attacks. Also, prolonged exposure to the elements of time and storage conditions perpetuates deterioration of the temporarily stored nuclear material.

Congress is currently considering legislation to develop a plan to remove spent nuclear fuel from these sites and safely transport it to a single, secure storage facility. We believe this is good public policy. But pending legislation notwithstanding, some nuclear waste is presently being transported by trucks. The IAFC is primarily concerned with the safety of the actual transport of the nuclear waste materials. In the event of a transportation accident, a local fire department will most often be the first responder. Thus our interest is in the rules and regulations governing the transportation of nuclear waste materials. Prior to any shipment we believe the following rules, regulations, and protocols must be in place:

- Require cask designs able to withstand severe accident scenarios with substantial built-in safety factors. A safe container will assure that no material will leak from a cask involved in a large catastrophic accident. This will protect the responders, citizens and the environment from danger and contamination.
- Require proper marking, labeling, placarding, shipping papers and emergency response information as regulated by U.S. Department of Transportation for rail and highway shipments be in place.
- Require the filing of written route plans to include origin/destination of the shipment, routes, planned stops, estimated arrival, and emergency telephone numbers in each state through which the shipment will traverse.
- Require carriers to use preferred routes for highway shipments - interstate highways, bypasses and beltways. States may propose alternative routes to the interstate highway system. However, fire and emergency response agencies in the potentially affected states and localities must be consulted in designation of alternate routes.
- Require that shippers notify the governor seven days in advance of the material being transported through the state.

3
continued

- Recommend that legislation and regulation require governors and their emergency managers to notify the response forces in each jurisdiction through which the shipment will pass. It is critical for local planning purposes that this notification be made.
- Require a tail escort for each shipment. This escort needs to be knowledgeable of radiation, have appropriate equipment and instruments, be uniformed, be knowledgeable of the Incident Command System and be ready to provide intelligence information to the Incident Commander about the condition associated with the radioactive materials involved. After shipments become a routine matter, consideration may be given to eliminating the escort.

4

From a fire service perspective, the most important element of any plan to transport nuclear waste is firefighter training. Emergency response training must be provided to local agencies along the proposed shipment routes. This training should be provided by the federal government and be separate from the current OSHA training requirements of first responders to hazardous materials incidents. Training for these first responders must be shipment-specific and there should be no requirement that these responders be qualified as hazardous materials technicians.

5

The International Association of Fire Chiefs is certain that nuclear waste material can be transported safely when the containers meet high safety standards, when local fire and emergency response agencies are given advance notice of shipments, and when these local first responders have been properly trained to deal with radiological emergencies.

The IAFC very much appreciates the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be pleased to respond to any inquiries you may have.