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Yucca Mountain Project
Additional Comments

Good (afternoon) (evening).

My name is Mel Bauer. I am a local resident of Amargosa Valley, and a citizen concerned with the proposed site recommendation for Yucca Mountain as a repository for nuclear waste.

My background is technical in nature and as a design engineer includes considerable experience in research and development.

First I wish to thank the Department of Energy for providing this opportunity to voice my continuing concerns for the risks to the health, safety, and welfare that the potential for contamination of the area and the other environmental effects could have on the thousands of residents that live in the vicinity of this proposed radioactive waste repository, and the over one million people who visit the area each year to experience our National Park.

I am also very much concerned by the negative economic impact and potential loss of visitors to the many attractions in the Death Valley area due to a perception that they may be subjected to increased radiation exposure.

Some of you may already be aware of the more technical viewpoints expressed by my article published in the September 12, 2001 issue of the Pahrump Valley Times as well as the comment letter dated September 13, 2001 sent to the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office in North Las Vegas, both of which address my concerns of a site recommendation that would move the project forward at Yucca Mountain.

But today, I would like to just briefly address another area that should be of great concern, the potential for acts of terrorism. It may be difficult to imagine an isolated mountain in rural Nevada as a terrorist's target, and if it were the target, gaining access to the

radioactive fuel rods probably would not be the goal, but at the same time a concentration of a potentially lethal material at a single site would not be ignored by the purveyors of fear.

Section S.4.1.15 of the draft Environmental Impact Statement Summary dated July 1999 addressing sabotage (or terrorism) is without doubt an inadequate position when confronted by the type of event we have experienced during the past few weeks. Shock, anxiety, and the ensuing fear of the unknown are the goal of acts of terrorism. The fear, confusion, potential for ensuing panic, and the demoralizing effect of knowing that some terrorist act had penetrated a nuclear waste storage facility could very well have a more devastating long term effect than the loss of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon combined.

Whereas the loss of the World Trade Center and the damage to the Pentagon primarily were related to the intense shock, destruction, and the sheer daring of the perpetrators, a continuing and long term threat of the release of lethal radioactivity as a result of some disruption of the Yucca Mountain facility design function would have the potential for greater anxiety, confusion, and panic with demoralizing emotional damage to the residents and the millions of visitors to the area of just not knowing what and when to expect a catastrophic result.

The previously referenced section of the Environmental Impact Statement Summary on sabotage states that: "The repository would not represent an attractive target...." This is simply not a valid statement to those with the intent to distract, confuse and divert resources to gain an advantage. The terrorist's attraction of gaining access and use of the spent fuel rods may not be a consideration, but the impact of blocking the ventilation system, jamming egress to the tunnels, or a long term disruption of the operational power sources each can have a crucial and detrimental effect to the safe operation of the facility. And any of the latter can be accomplished without access to commercial passenger or military aircraft.

The repository as proposed is highly dependent on maintaining a safe temperature within the concrete lined rock tunnels from heat generated by the spent fuel rods. Excessive

heat will release the moisture contained in the concrete lining and rock matrix of the drifts beyond the design characteristics of both the tunnels and the spent fuel storage containers. Although the design of the storage containers is intended to resist moisture, the combination of high temperature and excessive humidity over several years is believed to be well beyond the design criteria of these containers.

That same heat will result in the eventual decomposition of the concrete liner and welded tuff matrix of the mountain destroying the integrity of the overall repository design. Although this may be a somewhat long term effect, the loss of ventilation and/or access to inspect and repair the repository during the early years does pose an unwarranted and unnecessary risk to safe storage.

Is it reasonable to expect an effective defense against this type of terrorist attack? Or, would the response be similar to the Pentagon incident? I ask you; could the diversion of a private aircraft from a nearby air corridor less than 30 miles away (or for that matter a flight from some nearby desert location) attack the site entrances or parachute operatives to the ventilating system or even deploy a heat-seeking missile for the same purpose, be successful because scrambling aircraft from the nearest military base ends up arriving 12 minutes late and a billion dollars short?

If the design proposed for Yucca Mountain is safe as we have been told and we should not harbor serious concerns about the future of our area, its residents, and visitors, why is it that no other area has been given similar consideration? Welded tuff is not the only suitable material that can meet the criteria for a repository.

The Nevada desert is not a waste land and it doesn't deserve to become the garbage dump for the rest of the world. The history, the natural resources, the ecology, and even the beauty of the desert, may not be considered important to some, but it is important to those who live here and it is important to the many visitors who come from all parts of the world. Are we to believe that our own leaders are lacking in some knowledge that the people from other countries find of value?

The risks, both real and perceived, of: a detrimental effect on the long term economy of the area, the health of the residents and that of our visitors, as well as an eventual effect on the environment, should be sufficient justification for this nation to direct DOE's funding and efforts toward a real solution to the problem and not just an attempt to sweep the radioactive waste under some rocky up-thrust of a mountain in south central Nevada.

Thank You!


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