

News from Around the Complex

August 1–31, 2009

August 29, 2009

Nuclear waste now stored outside reactor: Kewaunee plant has run out of interior storage, *Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel*

After decades of national debate over what to do with spent nuclear fuel, and with no resolution in sight, the Kewaunee nuclear power plant in northeastern Wisconsin finally ran out of storage space inside the plant. So over the past week, Kewaunee workers have begun storing radioactive waste in casks on the grounds of the reactor, a short distance from the shores of Lake Michigan. After a practice run a few weeks ago, workers moved spent fuel into the first of the 25-ton, 16-foot-long casks and then transferred the cask into a concrete vault outside the building Aug. 22, said Mark Kanz, spokesman for the Kewaunee Power Station. A second cask was transferred Thursday. An expert on nuclear waste from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's regional office in Chicago was on hand for the first procedure, said Viktoria Mitlyng, an agency spokeswoman. The process went smoothly, she said.

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/55949067.html>

August 28, 2009

Appeal begins in high-profile fight over hot waste, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

Utah's court fight over who controls the flow of radioactive waste is turning into a national test case, as the state and its allies formally launched their appeal on Thursday and waste agencies representing eight more states prepared to join the fray. Attorneys for Utah, the Northwest Interstate Compact on Low-level Radioactive Wastes and the Rocky Mountain Compact filed their initial arguments Thursday at the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. Representing 11 states, the three want the Denver court to overturn U.S. District Court Judge Ted Stewart's May ruling in favor of the Salt Lake City nuclear waste company EnergySolutions Inc. Rocky Mountain Compact attorneys said Stewart's decision puts the nation's entire waste oversight system at risk.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_13218826

See Previous NFAC Article (June 24, 2009):

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705312405/Appeal-on-Italian-N-waste-ruling.html>

August 26, 2009

German nuke waste storage site 'dead', *United Press International*

Germany's only storage test facility for high-level nuclear waste, into which Berlin has invested nearly \$2 billion over the past years, is unsafe and needs to be closed, experts say. German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel, a known opponent of nuclear energy, said Wednesday that the salt dome Gorleben, chosen in the 1970s to become Germany's national storage facility for high-level nuclear waste by 2030, "is dead." The comments came a day after it emerged that the former government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl had brushed over legal and safety concerns related to the site. The Kohl government altered a scientists' report that came to the conclusion that the dome in Lower Saxony was not suitable for long-term storage of nuclear waste, the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper reports.

http://www.upi.com/Energy_Resources/2009/08/26/German-nuke-waste-storage-site-dead/UPI-25871251311089/

August 25, 2009

Western Governors Concerned: Most Proposed Sites for Mercury Storage in the West, *WGA Press Release*

DENVER -- Western Governors say they are concerned that five of seven areas identified as potential sites for the storage of mercury are located in Western states and urged the U.S. Department of Energy to do a comprehensive assessment that includes risks and impacts related to transportation. Gov. Brian Schweitzer (Mont.), Chairman of the Western Governors' Association, and C.L. "Butch" Otter (Idaho), Vice Chairman, wrote to DOE regarding the scoping process used to identify potential sites for the long-term management and storage of elemental mercury.

<http://www.westgov.org/wga/press/mercury8-25-09.htm>

August 25, 2009

The search for a nuclear graveyard, *The Globe and Mail*

Wanted: Friendly, open-minded community in need of jobs and a whack of infrastructure cash. Must be willing to play host to nuclear waste, perhaps until the end of time. More than six decades after joining the nuclear club, Canada is home to 22 nuclear reactors, 18 of them in operation, producing about 15 per cent of the country's electricity. Canada also has 40,000 metric tonnes of radioactive waste - and counting. For years, the issue of how to best dispose of this waste has plagued policy-makers, scientists and citizens. Suggestions have included shooting it into outer space or exporting it to the South Pole. Now, Canada is preparing to get rid of its nuclear detritus once and for all - by burying it. That solution will cost \$16-billion to \$24-billion, and it could take until 2020 just to choose a location.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/the-search-for-a-nuclear-graveyard/article1263189/>

August 24, 2009

50 Years After America's Worst Nuclear Meltdown: Human error helped worsen a nuclear meltdown just outside Los Angeles, and now human inertia has stymied the radioactive cleanup for half a century, *Miller-McCune*

This press release — issued five weeks after the end of the United States' worst nuclear reactor meltdown — was the public's first notification that something unusual had happened up on "The Hill." For the next 20 years, it remained the only public notification about the accident at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory on a mountaintop in California's eastern Ventura County, on the border with the San Fernando Valley.***Fifty years later, the contaminated site has yet to be cleaned up, although this month two federal agencies promised to plow ahead without the site's current owner, Boeing. And in March, the Department of Energy provided \$38.3 million in funds to complete the radiologic survey of "Area IV" as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Unlike the then-remote hilltop it once was, now more than a half million people live within 10 miles of The Hill, and downtown Los Angeles is 30 miles away.

http://www.miller-mccune.com/science_environment/50-years-after-nuclear-meltdown-1438

See Previous NFAC Article (August 4, 2009):

<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2009/aug/04/boeing-wont-need-upgraded-permit-for-field-lab/>

See also August 19 article below

August 24, 2009

Uranium-233 plan advances, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The Department of Energy and its contractor team are moving forward with a controversial \$384 million project that will "down-blend" a stockpile of uranium-233 to remove its fission capability and prepare the highly radioactive material for disposal at the Nevada Test Site. DOE has scheduled a major design review in September that will look at the evolving plans for how to deal with the radioactive material, which currently is stored in a heavily shielded, high-security facility at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. "I believe that what they've come up with now will certainly work, and it's simplified in several ways that I think are reducing the risk of something going wrong," said Steve McCracken, DOE's environmental manager in Oak Ridge.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/aug/24/uranium-233-plan-advances/>

August 19, 2009

Santa Susana cleanup deal released, *Ventura County Star*

A draft cleanup agreement between the state and two federal agencies that conducted operations at a polluted former rocket engine and nuclear test site near Simi Valley was released Wednesday for public review and comment. Missing from the consent order between the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control, the U.S. Department of Energy and NASA is the Boeing Co., the primary owner of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. "Unfortunately we have not gotten to a public review stage with Boeing," Maziar Movassaghi, acting director of the DTSC, said in an interview. Movassaghi declined to discuss the sticking point in negotiations but said the tentative agreement with the two federal agencies covers about 90 percent of the radiological contamination at the site and 50 percent of the chemical pollution.

<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2009/aug/19/santa-susana-cleanup-deal-released/>

Draft consent order available at:

http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Projects/upload/SSFL_DRAFTConsent-Order_DOENASA.pdf

See Previous NFAC Article (August 4, 2009):

<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2009/aug/04/boeing-wont-need-upgraded-permit-for-field-lab/>

August 19, 2009

Numbers: 2-year, \$118M work at K-27 will employ 275, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

Pre-demolition work at the former K-27 uranium-enrichment building is under way, and the Department of Energy said the Recovery Act project will employ between 225 and 275 people for most of the two-year effort. Bechtel Jacobs Co., DOE's cleanup manager in Oak Ridge is managing the project. DOE said the work will involve removal of asbestos and other hazardous materials and generally prepare the big four-story building -- with a total square footage equivalent to six football fields -- so it can be demolished safely in the future. K-27 was a sister facility to the original K-25 gaseous diffusion plant, which was built during World War II to enrich uranium for atomic bombs. It has been idle for decades and has significantly deteriorated, much like K-25, adding to the hazardous conditions. Miles of process equipment will be stabilized or injected with foam to immobilize uranium deposits before being sent to disposal sites.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/08/numbers_2-year_118m_work_at_k-.html

August 18, 2009

Storing nuclear waste a \$24-billion problem, *CBC News*

There are two million high-level radioactive fuel bundles sitting at temporary storage sites in Canada, as the Nuclear Waste Management Organization wrestles with the mandate of finding a community to host a central storage facility for the waste for perhaps tens of thousands of years. More than 120,000 high-level radioactive fuel bundles are stored at the Point Lepreau nuclear power plant in New Brunswick. (Canadian Press) More than 120,000 high-level radioactive fuel bundles are stored at the Point Lepreau nuclear power plant in New Brunswick. Throw in the fact that the cost of storing this nuclear waste could be up to \$24 billion — a figure that will likely rise — and environmental groups are dead set against a central facility, and it shapes up to be a challenge of colossal proportions.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/08/18/f-nuclear-waste-storage.html>

August 18, 2009

Experts explore Yucca alternative, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

For more than 20 years, the government's plan to dispose of highly radioactive spent fuel piling up at U.S. nuclear power reactors has been to haul it to Yucca Mountain and entomb it in a maze of tunnels. But this year, more than a decade before the first shipment was ever expected to arrive at the mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, and years before a license could have been approved for the project, the Obama administration halted funding, saying the Nevada site was "not an option." That prompted a group of university experts on nuclear waste policy to explore another plan. That plan, they hope, will chart the course for a soon-to-be-chosen Department of Energy blue ribbon panel to follow as it sets out to develop a new national nuclear waste strategy.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/53549632.html>

Report Available at:

<http://acdis.illinois.edu/assets/docs/Plan%20D%20Spent%20Nuclear%20Fuel.pdf>

August 13, 2009

Complaint leads to meeting on SRS energy park, *Augusta Chronicle*

A workshop to discuss a proposed 2,700-acre energy park at Savannah River Site will be held next week and was scheduled after an environmental group's complaint that more public involvement was needed in the planning process. In a June 21 letter dated to Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Friends of the Earth asked that the department halt development of an environmental assessment that could lead to the land's lease to the SRS Community Reuse Organization for an energy park. The group's primary concern is that the park could become another place that handles or processes nuclear waste, rather than a research center for alternative energy fuels, said Tom Clements, the group's Southeastern nuclear campaign coordinator.

http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/08/13/met_544217.shtml

August 11, 2009

Washington state, Energy Department announce deal on Hanford nuclear waste cleanup deadlines, *Los Angeles Times*

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — Washington state and federal officials announced a court-enforceable schedule Tuesday for cleaning up the nation's most contaminated nuclear site, ending more than two years of negotiations that followed dozens of missed deadlines. Southeast Washington's sprawling Hanford nuclear reservation, created as part of the top-secret Manhattan Project to build the atomic bomb during World War II, has been a focus of extensive cleanup efforts for two decades. In that

time, the pact that governs cleanup has been changed more than 400 times. Washington State sued the Energy Department last November over missed cleanup deadlines, though the two sides settled part of the lawsuit in February. That agreement accelerated cleanup of contaminated groundwater along the neighboring Columbia River, among other things, and both sides said it would shrink the 586-square-mile site to just 75 square miles by 2015. The consent decree that was filed Tuesday morning with the U.S. District Court in Spokane sets new deadlines for the remaining points of contention: emptying underground waste tanks and building a plant to treat that waste.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-us-hanford-cleanup,1,6578170.story>

DOE Press Release: <http://www.energy.gov/news2009/7786.htm>

August 7, 2009

3 Piketon citizens' board members resign, *Chillicothe Gazette*

PIKETON - Three members of the citizen board tasked with offering advice to the Department of Energy on its Piketon site submitted their resignations at a meeting Thursday night. Lee Blackburn, Lorry Swain and Andrew Feight resigned at the start of a meeting of the Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) at The Ohio State University Endeavor Center in Piketon. In addition, Board member Terry Smith left the meeting in frustration, and two residents who had applied for an open position on the board withdrew their applications. "Overshadowing all is our recognition that the SSAB mission has been obstructed by DOE's failure to abide by federal regulations and guard against conflicts of interest," said Swain, as she read from a letter the trio was submitting to Department of Energy Environmental Management Assistant Secretary Inés Triay. The members expressed concern some members of the board were contractors or employees of the Department of Energy and others were tied to the Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative (SODI), creating a conflict of interest.

<http://www.chillicothegazette.com/article/20090807/NEWS01/908070301/1002>

August 7, 2009

Request for Information on Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal and Notice of Public Meeting, *Federal Register Notice*

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is conducting a public meeting to gather information to assess the effect of a lack of access to low-level waste (LLW) disposal facilities on those who use radioactive sources or materials in conducting research such as universities and hospitals. The purpose of this information gathering is to identify important research that has been impacted and/or stopped because of a lack of disposal options for radioactive sources or materials. This information will be provided to the Commission to inform future Commission decision making. The NRC is planning to host a public meeting on this topic at its Rockville, MD Headquarters on the morning of October 7, 2009.

<http://0-edocket.access.gpo.gov.library.colby.edu/2009/E9-18947.htm>

August 6, 2009

EnergySolutions' Utah site due trainloads of depleted uranium, *Salt Lake Tribune*

More trains filled with depleted uranium are coming to Utah. Even as state regulators consider a moratorium on new shipments of the radioactive material -- which becomes more hazardous over time -- the U.S. Department of Energy plans to ship another 14,800 barrels of it to the EnergySolutions Inc. disposal site in Tooele

County. Part of the \$1.6 billion in federal stimulus money for the Savannah River cleanup site in South Carolina will pay for rail cars filled with depleted uranium to be buried in Utah during the next 13 months. "This is exactly the situation we were hoping to prevent by asking the state Radiation Control Board to enact a moratorium on depleted uranium," said Christopher Thomas of the Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah. The EnergySolutions site, about 80 miles west of Salt Lake City, has buried 49,000 tons of depleted uranium waste from past cleanups nationwide.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_12998854

August 6, 2009

Push is on for mine cleanup funds to go to uranium sites, *Salt Lake Tribune*
GALLUP, N.M. - The name Poison Canyon offers a hint of what's faced by those trying to clean up abandoned uranium mines in the West. The area north of the village of Milan contains some of the 259 abandoned uranium sites in New Mexico that need cleanup. State officials are pressuring the federal government to direct more money to those areas because of their unique hazard of radioactivity. "In this case, a pile of rocks is more than just a pile of rocks," said New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division Director Bill Brancard. There are hundreds of thousands of safety issues at abandoned hardrock mines in 13 western states, according to the Government Accountability Office. Thousands of sites, many dating to the 19th century, also are considered environmentally damaged.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_13007900

August 5, 2009

Energy parks to be focus of meeting, *Aiken Standard*

Both sides of an ideological divide may be out in force later this month as the idea of "energy parks" at the Savannah River Site is set for discussion and explanation at a public meeting. Calls to arms have already been sent out by both sides of the nuclear argument ahead of a meeting scheduled for Aug. 18 from 1 to 5 p.m. in the North Augusta Municipal Center. The forum is expected to, for the first time, define what the Department of Energy and other SRS stakeholders mean by the term "energy park" and what they hope will occupy such a park. Ideas that vary from nuclear reprocessing facilities, commercial reactors and industrial sites to biomass projects and other renewable energy initiatives have all been part of the speculation since the idea of an energy park was floated some time ago.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/Local/070609-energy-parks>

August 4, 2009

Hanford waste study delayed over Yucca Mountain, *Tri-City Herald*

A long-awaited study expected to lead to final decisions on environmental cleanup of much of the Hanford nuclear reservation's waste has been delayed because of Yucca Mountain. The draft Tank Closure & Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement most recently was expected to be released in May. Now the Department of Energy is saying the draft report, expected to be thousands of pages long, will be available by the end of the year. The draft was originally planned to be ready in spring 2007. "It's a very large, complex document that requires a very thorough and focused effort to get it done and done right," said Carrie Meyer, Department of Energy spokeswoman.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/13808.html>

August 4, 2009

US Senate panel moves DOE fossil, nuclear nominees to full Senate, *Platts*

Energy Services

The US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on Tuesday voted to confirm Department of Energy nominees to head its Office of Fossil Energy and to run the department's civilian nuclear programs. The nominations now move to the full Senate for consideration. Warren Miller, a 25-year veteran of DOE's Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, would fill the position of both assistant secretary of nuclear energy and director of the department's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. Previously, DOE has staffed the two posts with separate officials. Combining the two offices under the direction of one person comes as the Obama administration moves to kill the controversial Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in Nevada.

<http://www1.platts.com/Nuclear/News/6478760.xml?sub=Nuclear&p=Nuclear/News&>

August 4, 2009

Boeing won't need upgraded permit for field lab, *Ventura County Star*

Boeing can remove contaminated soil from its Santa Susana Field Lab site with an "over the counter" permit from the county of Ventura, instead of one that would require the approval of the county Board of Supervisors, the board decided Tuesday. The board voted 3-2 against a motion from Supervisor Linda Parks that would have required Boeing to obtain a more detailed "discretionary permit" for its grading and clearing work at the former rocket testing site near Simi Valley. There was a partial nuclear meltdown there in 1959 and other polluting activities over the years, when the property was owned by Rocketdyne. Boeing has already applied for a grading permit to remove about 2,700 cubic yards of soil from its portion of the field lab property. Under normal county rules, a simple "ministerial" permit is sufficient for that type of work, and Parks had proposed changing the rules to require a discretionary permit for any grading at the field lab site.

<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2009/aug/04/boeing-wont-need-upgraded-permit-for-field-lab/>

August 3, 2009

SRS MOX project on schedule, *Augusta Chronicle*

Construction on one of the National Nuclear Security Administration's largest and most expensive projects celebrated its second anniversary last week with the announcement that the \$4.86 million Mixed Oxide Fuel Plant at Savannah River Site remains on schedule. The MOX facility will use surplus plutonium from dismantled nuclear bombs to make mixed oxide fuel for use in commercial nuclear power plants. The facility is part of the nation's effort to make sure plutonium can no longer be used for nuclear weapons, while simultaneously generating electricity for utility customers. Groundbreaking occurred Aug. 1, 2007. Overall design, procurement and construction activities are proceeding on schedule and within budget, according to Energy Department officials.

http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/latest/lat_700725.shtml?v=0721

August 2, 2009

Radioactive waste dump expansion possible in Utah, *Houston Chronicle*

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman's impending resignation could open the door for a nuclear waste disposal firm to increase the capacity of the country's largest low-level radioactive waste dump by about 78 percent. EnergySolutions Inc. was already on a path to pile up to 9.8 million cubic yards of waste on its mile-square facility in Utah in 2007 when Huntsman threatened to use a regional compact to block its application. Instead, Huntsman and company CEO Steve Creamer signed

an agreement in which EnergySolutions withdrew its application and reaffirmed its commitment not to dispose of hotter radioactive waste in the state. In exchange, Huntsman said the company could convert 3.6 million cubic yards of space reserved for uranium mill tailings so it could handle the type of debris that comes from decommissioned nuclear power plants. Huntsman also pledged not to tell the compact to reduce the 5.5 million cubic yards of waste already licensed to the company as long as it didn't seek to expand.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/6557950.html>