Action Alert:

Stop Mobile Chernobyls on the Roads, Rails, and Waterways; Stabilize Hanford’s Leaking Radioactive Wastes as Top Priority

Hanford’s radioactive waste risks need to be stabilized. Leaking single shell tanks that are decades beyond their design life need to be replaced with new, state of the art double shell tanks, and the radioactive liquids and sludges transferred to prevent leaks into the environment. High-level radioactive liquid and sludge wastes should then be vitrified into solid glass logs, to maximize longer-term stability. These should be the top priorities.

Hanford’s leaks should NOT be twisted to further the political goals of the nuclear industry. For example, in a bid to shift liability onto the American taxpayer, nuclear power utilities are lobbying the U.S. Congress and White House to rush the transfer of title for commercial irradiated nuclear fuel. They have profited by generating it as a byproduct of electricity production from splitting atoms.

The push is for “centralized interim storage” on a regional -- or even national -- basis, targeting communities already burdened by military radioactive waste dumps (such as the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico, and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina), as well as Native American reservations, with de facto permanent “parking lot dumps.” This is an environmental injustice.

As such sites would supposedly be merely temporary, this would effectively multiply the health, safety and security risks of truck, train, and barge (including on the West Coast) shipments, as the wastes would someday have to be transported, yet again, to permanent dumpsites – perhaps back in the direction from which they first came.

For the wastes that already exist, hardened on-site storage (HOSS) – emptying vulnerable pools, safeguarding wastes against accidents, fortifying them against attacks, and building quality dry storage casks that will last without leakage -- is a preferable interim alternative to such unnecessarily risky shell games on the roads, rails and waterways. In this sense, HOSS is the needed commercial equivalent of what needs to happen first at Hanford – safeguard, secure, and stabilize the wastes where they are now, and where they will inevitably remain for years or decades to come, rather than rushing haphazardly into transportation for no good reason. Isolation of the wastes from the environment should be the top priority in the short, medium, long, and eternal term (high-level radioactive wastes and irradiated nuclear fuel are hazardous for a million years, or more).

For wastes that have yet to be generated, the only real solution is to not make them in the first place. The creation of forever deadly radioactive waste represents a curse on countless future generations, who must keep the wastes from escaping into the living environment. Energy efficiency and renewable sources of electricity, such as wind and solar, are ready replacements for nuclear power (as well as fossil fuels) – with the added benefits of being safer, more secure, genuinely clean, reliable, and ever more cost effective.

Please contact your U.S. Senators, as well as your U.S. Representative. Urge them to block Mobile Chernobyls on the roads and rails, and floating Fukushima’s on the West Coast. Also, urge them to prioritize new replacement tanks, and quality vitrification, at Hanford as top priorities.

You can phone your Members of Congress via the U.S. Capitol Switchboard, (202) 224-3121, and write or email them via the contact page at their respective websites.

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