News from Beyond Nuclear and the “Stop Fukushima Freeways” Campaign

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“Stop Fukushima Freeways” Campaign Kicks Off

New map shows most states would be corridors for high-risk, high-level radioactive waste shipments

Expert Tele-Briefing 2 pm (Eastern), Tues., Oct. 27 (See end of press release for call-in details)

Washington, D.C. – Thousands to tens of thousands of high-level radioactive waste shipments would cross through 45 states and the District of Columbia, if plans for the country’s first nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada move forward. Today, Beyond Nuclear, in coalition with NIRS and dozens of grassroots groups nationwide, released maps of the likely routes radioactive waste shipments would use. The groups want residents in these corridor communities across the country to weigh in with Congress about the dangers.

According to the national map, highly radioactive irradiated nuclear fuel from 26 closed, and 100 still operating, atomic reactors, located at scores of nuclear power stations in dozens of states, would pass through all but a handful of states, on the interstate highways, main line railways, and numerous waterways. See the national map, showing these nuclear power plant locations, as well as targeted shipping routes, posted online at: http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/news2015/ymroutes15.png.

Surface waters documented by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as potential shipping routes for barges of high-level radioactive waste include: Chesapeake Bay; James River of Virginia; Delaware Bay; New Jersey’s Atlantic coast; Hudson River of New York; Long Island Sound; Cape Cod Bay, Massachusetts Bay, and Boston Harbor; Lake Michigan; Mississippi River; Tennessee River; Missouri River; California’s Pacific Coast; and Florida’s Atlantic Coast. See barge route maps posted at: http://www.nirs.org/fukushimafreeways/watertransport.htm.

More than 100 major metropolitan areas, as well as the agricultural heartland, would be impacted. Each shipment would contain several times more radioactive material than the Hiroshima bomb blast released, with tons to tens of tons of irradiated nuclear fuel assemblies in each shipment. DOE studies completed in the 1990s (and incorporated into DOE’s 2002 Final Environmental Impact Statement for Yucca Mountain) confirmed that accidents in transporting the waste to Nevada would be a certainty, due to the large
number of shipments, and the long shipment miles, that would be required. The shipments would also be vulnerable to attack or sabotage along the hundreds or thousands of miles that each cask would travel.

“Our country is not ready for unprecedented daily shipments of high-level radioactive waste, for decades on end,” said Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Watchdog at Beyond Nuclear. “First responders are not adequately trained nor equipped to handle a radioactive waste disaster. We have all witnessed horrible oil train derailments and explosions in recent months. A transport disaster involving tons of high-level radioactive waste in or near an American city could force thousands of people to evacuate their homes, schools, and businesses and radioactively-contaminate dozens of square miles,” Kamps concluded.

“We refer to these shipments as potential Mobile Chernobyls, floating Fukushimas, and dirty bombs on wheels,” said Kamps. “Such risks should not be rushed into, just to transfer title and liability from the commercial atomic reactors generating the wastes, onto the backs of American taxpayers.”

Some in Congress want to force the Yucca Mountain high-level radioactive waste dump to open in Nevada, over President Obama’s and the state’s objections as well as that of the Western Shoshone Indian Nation. The president has defunded the proposed Yucca Mountain repository since 2010, effectively cancelling the controversial project, while Nevada believes the site is not suitable for storing nuclear waste and opposes the project. Nevada controls land and water rights the federal government would need to complete the project. To overcome that obstacle, Congress would need to enact a law overriding the state’s rights. Doing so would then open the door for the nuclear waste shipments to begin.

“Congress should support the people of Nevada and cancel the Yucca dump,” said Kamps of Beyond Nuclear. “It is unconscionable to risk the lives of countless millions of corridor community residents by transporting radioactive waste through our country, just to dump it at Yucca Mountain, where we know it will massively leak anyway. We need real solutions to the radioactive waste dilemma, and we are never going to get there until Congress cancels the Yucca dump. Until then, the radioactive waste can be stored more securely where it is now, without putting it on our roads, rails, and waterways, traveling through the heart of countless communities,” concluded Kamps.

Hundreds of environmental groups, representing all 50 states, have called for Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS) of irradiated nuclear fuel, as an alternative to such bad ideas as the Yucca dump. The HOSS "Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors" is posted online at: http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/hossprinciples3232010.pdf.

Beyond Nuclear is calling on Members of Congress, Governors, State Attorneys General, and other elected officials at all levels of government, to oppose the Yucca dump and ensure transportation of nuclear waste only occurs when there is a scientifically proven, environmentally sound, and socially responsible long-term management plan. The
nuclear waste problem can never truly be resolved until nuclear power plants are permanently shut down and stop generating radioactive waste. New reactors, and old reactor license extensions, only exacerbate the problem: more dumpsites would need to be created, and the transportation of lethal atomic waste would have to continue indefinitely.

Large-scale nuclear waste transport would also occur if, as some in Congress advocate, a "centralized interim storage" site for high-level radioactive waste were created. In that case, the waste would either have to move twice (once to the interim site, and then to a permanent site), thus doubling the risks, or the "interim" site would become a de facto permanent “parking lot” surface radioactive waste dump--without going through the necessary scientific characterization.

Join us TODAY (Tuesday, October 27th) for a Tele-Briefing with national experts, Dr. Fred Dilger of Black Mountain Research, author of the nuclear transport maps, and Dr. Marvin Resnikoff of Radioactive Waste Management Associates who has done extensive work on nuclear waste containers, shipments and accident risks.

Tele-Briefing is today 2-3 pm (Eastern), Tues., Oct. 27.

Call: 605-562-3140 and enter code: 723281#