Energywire: Tuesday, September 11, 2018

Interim Storage Partners LLC is seeking a license for a proposed consolidated interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel. The project would be located in West Texas. Interim Storage Partners

A proposal to send used nuclear fuel to West Texas didn't end last year, but it did stall during a trip to corporate purgatory.

Now a joint venture called Interim Storage Partners LLC has the plan moving forward again. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission recently restarted its review of a consolidated interim storage application for a site in Andrews County, Texas. And the NRC staff's safety, security and environmental reviews could be finished in summer 2020.

Critics are worried about what's brewing. They're asking questions and hoping for more public meetings. Some would like to halt the project. One of the chief opponents knows the proposal won't be easy to stop, but she's working to rally Texans and others against the plan.
"Most people don't even know this is happening," said Karen Hadden, executive director of the Texas-based Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Coalition. "The public is unaware, and they're unaware of the risks that they are about to be exposed to."

The project is another flashpoint in a long-running debate over nuclear energy and associated waste after a number of U.S. nuclear plants stopped producing power or announced plans to close. Congress has considered legislation that could help pave the way for interim storage facilities in Texas and New Mexico as well as a longer-term site at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. Hadden has voiced concern about those three sites and potential plans to transport nuclear waste across the country.

The spent fuel storage plan for West Texas is tied to Waste Control Specialists (WCS), which has endured financial issues and houses low-level radioactive waste in the region. A plan by Valhi Inc. to unload WCS to EnergySolutions collapsed in 2017. Early this year, J.F. Lehman & Co. announced that an investment affiliate had acquired WCS. That was followed in March by news of a planned venture involving Orano USA and WCS (Energywire, March 19).

The new Orano-WCS entity — now called Interim Storage Partners, or ISP — later sought a restart of the NRC review that was halted in 2017. In August of this year, the NRC said the revised application was acceptable but that additional information would be sought.

"The NRC staff has reviewed your request and concludes that the revised license application provides information sufficient to resume its detailed review," the NRC said in a letter.

Jeff Isakson, chief executive of ISP, said in a recent statement that ISP looked forward "to an energized and timely process."
ISP said its venture initially is intended to store used nuclear fuel from shutdown reactor locations. That would lower the burden on U.S. taxpayers and allow sites to be redeveloped, it said. The application is for 40 years, though it could be extended by decades.

ISP outlined a first phase for storing 5,000 metric tons of heavy metal, which primarily is used uranium fuel. Reaching a capacity of 40,000 metric tons would involve future license amendments.

Construction and preoperational testing on the project could be finished by April 2022, according to an ISP environmental report.

A license application with the NRC said Orano USA ultimately is majority owned and controlled by an entity of the French government. But ISP has said its governing officers and management board members are U.S. citizens.

ISP said in a statement that the joint venture "combines the strengths of Orano's decades of expertise in used nuclear fuel packaging, storage and transportation with WCS' experience operating a unique facility serving both the commercial nuclear industry and the U.S. Department of Energy." There's a WCS information center in West Texas for people to seek more information. ISP also has a website about its plans.

Much of nuclear waste critics' focus had turned to an interim storage proposal from Holtec International for New Mexico. That plan is also under review at the NRC (Greenwire, May 9).

While Hadden said there was "a nice reprieve" on the West Texas proposal, she said "the threat is ever-present and on the burner now."

Instead of using the proposed interim sites or Yucca Mountain, Hadden would like to see the United States pursue a new location for a permanent repository that's geologically sound and uses improved storage technology.
A public step in the process for the West Texas site was evident in late August: a meeting about the emergency response plan. Representatives of the NRC, ISP and other interested parties attended in person in Maryland or on the phone.

The meeting covered aspects of the response plan and gave people a chance to interact. At one point, a speaker said that "nobody lives anywhere near us." That was followed by a description of the location as "in the middle of stinking nowhere." The remarks drew laughter as well as an unhappy response from a listener on the phone who wasn't sure who made them.

"There was a statement made about this site being in the middle of nowhere, and there was some snickering and giggling," said Monica Perales, an attorney. "I live in the middle of nowhere, and that's not appreciated."

In an interview last week, Perales said the attitude during the meeting "made me feel as though we in West Texas are expendable." She is a staff attorney with Fasken Oil and Ranch Ltd. of Midland, Texas. Perales said the company has concerns about how the project could affect its interests in the Permian Basin.

**Jeff Isakson, Interim Storage Partners**

In a recent statement, ISP said Isakson led a presentation by a number of ISP presenters.

"The intent of the comments was to emphasize the benefit of there being no residences within ISP's Emergency Planning Zone for nearly four miles from the site in all directions," Isakson said in the statement.

He apologized on behalf of ISP for "a poor choice of words by a technical team member." And Isakson said operating safely for the region's people, wildlife and environment is a priority.

Hadden sought information during the August meeting call about remediation plans if something were to happen. She was told the emergency plan establishes a framework and that more details would be developed in the future.

**View from the NRC**

Before the call ended, Tom "Smitty" Smith, an environmental activist in Texas who works on special projects for Public Citizen and is married to Hadden, unloaded on the NRC.

"I want to point out that we're having an emergency because our regulatory agency is failing to allow citizens to ask questions that are appropriate to protect themselves," Smith said, adding: "Our mouths are being taped shut because of actions by this commission."

An NRC representative said the meeting was ending due to time constraints and that some questions were beyond the meeting's scope. He said various venues are available for questions and concerns.

In a statement last week, David McIntyre, an NRC spokesman, said time can run short when several people are interested in speaking during a meeting. He said the staff does its best to accommodate people who want to speak.

McIntyre said the public generally can participate in this sort of licensing review in three ways — during the public comment on a scoping period and a draft environmental impact statement, through petitioning for an adjudicatory hearing, and by asking questions of NRC staff during certain technical meetings.

In a recent interview, Isakson of ISP said the NRC has a pretty good process to handle a license application.
There's an "opportunity for the public to be involved as part of that," he said.

Opponents have raised questions about the WCS site in the past and its potential effects on the environment, but ISP praised the location. ISP said the area includes a "formation of almost impermeable red-bed clay in a relatively remote, semi-arid, sparsely inhabited area." The plan to store used nuclear fuel there has seen support over the years from some leaders and residents in the region.

"To fully support the continued generation of clean air nuclear energy in the United States, our nation will need multiple, flexible used fuel management resources while developing a permanent federal repository," ISP said. "Our facility will be one of those resources."

A couple of key dates are approaching in terms of the NRC review of the West Texas storage proposal. Parties that wish to comment on the scope of the environmental impact statement should submit comments by Oct. 19. Previously received comments on that aspect will be considered by staff, the NRC said. Those that want to request a hearing related to the current license application should do so by Oct. 29.

McIntyre noted that ISP's application and the NRC's review is specific to the storage facility. If a license were granted, he said, ISP would decide what transportation packages and routes to use.

"The packages and routes would have to be approved by the NRC," McIntyre said. "ISP can choose from package designs previously certified by the NRC staff, or submit a new design for our review and approval."

ISP said its license application refers to used nuclear fuel being sent to the interim storage site by rail. Existing rail infrastructure could be expanded to help accommodate such deliveries.

Not taken for granted

Critics remain concerned about transportation, including the potential effects on cities and the potential for terrorists to target waste.

Hadden has called for public meetings in places such as Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Midland, El Paso and Andrews County to discuss issues related to possible interim nuclear waste storage in Texas. She's working on a public awareness campaign that's expected to take place later this month and run into October, featuring a full-scale mock radioactive waste transport cask.

Hadden argued future NRC requests for additional information could bring up new issues the public should be able to examine, so NRC deadlines should be extended. Critics say there is already a new financial situation to analyze in terms of ISP's involvement.

McIntyre said that once a draft environmental impact statement is completed — which could be in about a year — it would be typical to return to the region for public meetings and present draft conclusions and take public comments on the report.

The Federal Register ended up running a correction regarding the date by which a hearing should be requested in the ISP proceeding — changing it to Oct. 29 from Aug. 29. That was necessary because of what McIntyre called a mistake made at the printer. Hadden saw a bigger theme at play.

"That just strikes me as illustrative of the lack of attention to detail that's needed when you're dealing with radioactive waste," she said. "It's just one example that's sloppy."

Questions also remain about potential congressional action that could amend the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. The House passed a bill this year to help reform U.S. nuclear waste management (Greenwire, May 10). It would need to pass in the Senate to move forward, though the outlook is uncertain. In May, the CEO of the
Nuclear Energy Institute praised the House vote as a step toward implementing "the federal government's statutory obligation to manage used nuclear fuel."

ISP said "clarifying" the role of DOE in used fuel management would be welcome. But the venture insists that, even without a policy change, developing a private interim storage site would give fuel owners another cost-effective option.

"I think our business can go forward," Isakson said in an interview, "if the waste policy act is not changed."

The ISP CEO said his company is pleased to be involved in Andrews County. And he said WCS and Orano have a strong safety culture.

"There's been a long history of WCS working with the community and the community being comfortable with WCS," Isakson said. "We don't want [to] take it for granted.

Activists protest plan to transport nuclear waste to Texas

Published 8:43 am CDT, Wednesday, September 19, 2018San Antonio Express News

Activists protest plan to transport nuclear waste to Texas

Published 8:43 am CDT, Wednesday, September 19, 2018

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — Environmental activists are campaigning against a bill that would establish mobile storage canisters for nuclear waste to be transported to southern states like Texas.

The group Citizens Awareness Network brought a mock radioactive waste cask to Montpelier Monday. The group says nuclear waste should remain in place and well-protected, until a better disposal option comes along that won't put the public at risk. The activists are opposing a plan to ship nuclear waste from the decommissioned Vermont Yankee plant to interim storage sites in Andrews County, Texas and Hobbs, New Mexico.

Anti-nuclear waste tour kicks off in Houston

Organizers of the "Protect Texas from Radioactive Waste Tour" plan to travel to five Texas cities over the next week in protest of a proposed plan to store used nuclear materials in West Texas.
Several Texas organizations gathered in Houston on Tuesday to kick off their “Protect Texas from Radioactive Waste Tour,” the beginning of a renewed push to block a proposal to transport used nuclear fuel by train through Texas and store it in West Texas.

The tour’s organizers said they want to make people aware of the "high risk" implications of a proposal to build and operate a facility for 40,000 metric tons of irradiated fuel rods at an existing site in Andrews County.

If approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the project by Interim Storage Partners, a joint venture between Waste Control Specialists and Orano USA, would transport nuclear waste from around the country to the consolidated site in Texas and store it until a long-term storage site becomes available, according to the venture’s website.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission said in an August letter it would begin reviewing Interim Storage Partners’ license application and that its safety, security and environmental reviews of the proposal could conclude as early as August 2020.

Karen Hadden, the executive director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Coalition, told The Texas Tribune that announcement triggered renewed opposition to the project and is one of the reasons for the tour.

The organizations involved — the Coalition of Community Organizations, Nuclear Information and Resource Services, Beyond Nuclear, the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Coalition and Public Citizen — held a news conference by a railroad crossing in Houston, said Tom Smith, the special projects director of consumer rights advocacy group Public Citizen. Smith, who helped organize the tour, said in an interview with the Tribune that the news conference featured a 16-foot railroad container meant to replicate the transport cask that Interim Storage Partners would use to transport used nuclear fuel.

“We’re by the railroad tracks because we’re emphasizing that Texas businesses, hospitals and schools by the railroads are at high risk,” Hadden said. “It’s a bad idea to bring [nuclear waste] from around the country into Texas.”

The organizations instead want the used nuclear material to be kept at reactor sites in sturdier containers until a permanent storage site becomes available.

Smith said the proposed project presents a number of risks. A railroad accident would be disastrous, he said, because it could expose the public to harmful radiation and could cost municipalities hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up.

He also said nuclear waste on railcars running through densely populated areas like Houston, Dallas and San Antonio is at "high risk of terrorist sabotage."
Interim Storage Partners did not immediately respond to a request for comment regarding the tour, but on its website, it emphasizes the safety of its operations.

“Since 1965, more than 2,700 shipments of used fuel have been safely transported nearly 2 million miles across the United States — and there has never been a radiological release caused by a transportation accident,” Interim Storage Partners’ website said.

The website adds that “the transport cask surrounding the canister is specifically engineered with multiple barriers, including containment boundary, structural shell, gamma shielding material, and solid neutron shield,” and that the canister is sealed in thick-walled concrete when it arrives at the storage facility.

Smith said that after the news conference, the organizations planned to ask the Houston City Council to adopt a resolution against the proposed transportation of the nuclear material. He added that commissioners in San Antonio and Midland have already adopted similar resolutions.

“We’re trying to raise awareness because a lot of people don’t know this is planned,” Hadden said. She also said she hopes the tour will encourage people to submit comments on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s website before the Oct. 19 deadline.

Smith and Hadden said they have gone on nuclear waste tours before, one in West Texas last year and another this year for a separate proposed nuclear site in New Mexico. Over the next week, the current tour will continue at outdoor locations near railroads in San Antonio, Dallas, El Paso, Midland and Andrews, Smith said.

Interim Storage Partners' license application, which proposes a 40-year lease, is the second filed by the company. The first was submitted in April 2016, but its review was halted after Waste Control Specialists struggled to find the funds needed to continue with the application.

“We look forward to an energized and timely process and continuing to provide high-quality responses to any NRC requests for additional information,” Interim Storage Partners said in a written statement last month.

Federal lawmakers are mulling an amendment to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 that could accelerate the development of nuclear material storage sites. The amendment would require the Department of Energy to start its own program “to consolidate and temporarily store commercial spent nuclear fuel during the development, construction, and operation of a permanent nuclear waste repository.”
Environmental Groups Warn Nuclear Waste May Travel Through San Antonio by Rail

Posted By Sanford Nowlin on Wed, Sep 26, 2018 at 2:32 pm

Environmental activists speak out against a plan to ship nuclear waste via Texas railways during a press conference in front of the Alamodome.

Environmental groups on Wednesday spoke out against a plan to ship waste from nuclear reactors through San Antonio and other Texas metros on its way to a storage site near the New Mexico border.

If approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, a project by Interim Storage Partners — a partnership between Waste Control Specialists and Orano USA — would ship 40,000 tons of irradiated fuel rods from reactors around the country to West Texas' Andrews County.

"This is the hottest kind of radioactive waste," said Karen Hadden, executive director of
the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. "This is what they worried about at Fukushima [the site of the 2011 nuclear disaster in Japan]."

A coalition including SEED, Nuclear Information and Resource Services (NIRS), Public Citizen and others is taking a road show to Houston, Dallas and other Texas cities to build public opposition to the plan. Making the tour with them is an inflatable replica of a waste-shipping container.

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With the Alamodome on one side and chugging trains periodically interrupting the news conference, coalition members took turns warning that derailments, mishandling or sabotage could put neighborhoods or even whole cities at risk. Exposure to radiation can cause cancer, genetic damage and birth defects. Even brief unshielded exposure can be lethal.

The public has until Oct. 19 to file comments about the plan via a website set up by the coalition. Groups including SEED and the Sierra Club also expect to file lawsuits prior to the Oct. 29 deadline for court filings.

Both San Antonio and Bexar County have adopted resolutions opposing the plan, as have other Texas counties.

Interim Storage Partners were unavailable for immediate comment, but a FAQ on its website detailed the purported durability of its containers and strict federal regulations
under which it operates.

"Being stopped next to a transport cask of used nuclear fuel, even for hours, would not expose anyone to a harmful amount of radiation – and likely not any more exposure than the normal background radiation amount for that area," the website said.

But the environmental groups argue the waste is more secure stored onsite at nuclear plants until the U.S. can develop a permanent disposal facility. The West Texas location, which could be approved as early as 2020, is only temporary and expected to last 40 or more years, according to Interim Storage Partners' filings.

"This waste is not safe anywhere, but it's especially unsafe moving by roads, rails and waterways," said Diane D'Arrigo, NIRS's radioactive waste project director.
Karen Hadden, director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition, (center) speaks as (from left) Alice Canestaro-Garcia, Meredith McGuire, Margaret Day, Kerstin Rudek, and Yaneth Flores stand beside her.

A plan to bring highly radioactive waste from the nation’s nuclear reactors to West Texas has restarted, and a group of anti-nuclear activists is back at work trying to get it killed for good.

On Wednesday, longtime Austin activists Karen Hadden of the SEED Coalition and former Public Citizen Texas Director Tom “Smitty” Smith staged a press event with other activists from San Antonio, the Washington, D.C. area, and Germany at the train tracks next to the Alamodome.

They brought along an inflatable resembling a nuclear waste cask to lay near the rail lines. The group is bringing the cask on a statewide tour to represent the thousands of containers of waste that could roll through San Antonio and other cities on their way to the Waste Control Specialists' disposal site 30 miles outside of the Permian Basin town of Andrews, near the New Mexico border.
Anti-nuclear activists placed an inflatable mock nuclear waste storage cask near the rail line outside of the Alamodome on Wednesday, Sept. 26.

“This is dangerous, dangerous waste, and there’s no reason for it to come to Texas,” Hadden said.

After being on hold for more than a year, Waste Control Specialists’ application to begin accepting high-level nuclear waste is again active before the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the independent agency in charge of regulating the nuclear industry.

The application is now under a different name – Interim Storage Partners, the result of a joint venture between Waste Control Specialists and a company controlled by the French government.
For years, Waste Control Specialists has wanted to become a storage site for spent nuclear fuel rods now being stored at more than 62 operating or closed nuclear power plants around the country.

After they’re no longer used to generate power, the fuel rods remain dangerously radioactive for tens of thousands of years. Company executives have said their site is ideal because of its remote location and the impermeable clay soil in the area that isolate it from groundwater.

Waste Control Specialists officials did not return a phone call Friday seeking comment.

Across the country, the nuclear power industry has generated roughly 70,000 metric tons of this waste, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. That includes about 30 years' worth of waste now being stored at the South Texas Project, a nuclear plant jointly owned by San Antonio’s CPS Energy, Austin Energy, and NRG Energy.

Related: [CPS Energy Hears From Divided Crowd on Future of Power Generation](#)

Nuclear power plants generate electricity by using heat generated by nuclear fission to create steam that spins a turbine. After the fuel rods become too thermally cool to generate electricity, they still emit more than enough radiation to kill a person standing next to them without protective shielding.

That’s why the companies that own this waste store it in metal canisters inside of concrete casks that can weigh more than 100 tons.

Anti-nuclear activists say these casks are vulnerable to unforeseen disasters or terrorist attacks. However, an independent 2006 report by a National Research Council committee states they can withstand punctures, explosions, submersion, and other calamities, though they may be vulnerable to “very long duration, fully engulfing fires.”

Rather than moving the casks across the country to one location, the activists say the waste should instead continue to be stored where it is now with beefed-up security and shielding.
They also warn of the potential dangers involved in transporting the waste to West Texas.

“It is not safe anywhere, but it is even less safe moving it on roads, rail, and waterways,” said Diane D’Arrigo, radioactive waste project director for the Maryland-based Nuclear Information and Resource Service.

The region along the Texas-New Mexico border where Waste Control Specialists operates is already a major hub of the nuclear industry. Uranium enrichment facility Urenco and the Department of Energy’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant both lie on the New Mexico side.

For years, Waste Control Specialists has been disposing of low-level radioactive waste from sources like hospitals and research facilities, as well as hazardous waste considered too dangerous to dump in an ordinary landfill.
The proposal to bring the nation’s high-level nuclear waste to Andrews was put on hold for nearly a year until this March, when Waste Control Specialists and a subsidiary of Orano, a company controlled by the French government, announced it would resume the effort.

Financial concerns in 2017 led Waste Control Specialists to ask for a timeout in the federal permitting process. The company was trying to negotiate a sale to Energy Solutions, a competitor in the disposal of low-level radioactive waste.

Before then, Waste Control Specialists was wholly owned by Valhi, a conglomerate controlled by Dallas billionaire Harold Simmons before his death in 2013.

Federal antitrust lawyers sued to block the Energy Solutions acquisition, arguing that it would give the companies an unacceptable monopoly on the disposal of low-level waste. A federal judge agreed and blocked the sale in July 2017.

Then, in January, New York private equity firm J.F. Lehman and Co. announced that it had acquired Waste Control Specialists as a “platform investment in the environmental and technical services sector,” as stated in a news release at the time.

“[Waste Control Specialists] maintains an industry-leading reputation and provides an essential solution for the safe disposal of specialized waste streams,” J.F. Lehman partner Alex Harman said in a prepared statement. “We are excited to support the long-term success of the business through continued engagement and partnership with industry stakeholders.”

In June, the application was resumed under Interim Storage Partners, a joint venture between Waste Control Specialists and Orano USA, a subsidiary of energy company Orano. Orano is one of the few companies licensed to manufacture the casks used in nuclear waste storage.
The joint venture will have to contend not only with anti-nuke activists but also with business entities who oppose the project. These include Fasken Oil and Ranch, a major player in the Permian Basin, and an association for land and energy royalty owners in that region formed to fight the nuclear waste proposal.

In a Sept. 14 filing, an attorney representing both groups opposed the shipment of waste to Waste Control Specialists and another site under review for high-level waste disposal in New Mexico. Both entities have “members who live, work, and travel on or along transportation routes that [the companies] plan to use to transport spent nuclear fuel.”

Some local governments also have opposed the waste shipment. Last year, the City of San Antonio and Bexar County, led by then-Councilman Ron Nirenberg (D8) and Commissioner Tommy Calvert (Pct. 4), passed resolutions opposing the shipping of nuclear waste through San Antonio.

The public can submit comments on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s website or the federal rulemaking website until Oct. 19, with an Oct. 29 deadline for entities to legally intervene in the proceedings.

Environmental Groups Warn Nuclear Waste May Travel Through San Antonio by Rail
Environmental activists speak out against a plan to ship nuclear waste via Texas railways during a press conference in front of the Alamodome.

Environmental groups on Wednesday spoke out against a plan to ship waste from nuclear reactors through San Antonio and other Texas metros on its way to a storage site near the New Mexico border.

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A coalition including SEED, Nuclear Information and Resource Services (NIRS), Public
Citizen and others is taking a road show to Houston, Dallas and other Texas cities to build public opposition to the plan. Making the tour with them is an inflatable replica of a waste-shipping container.

**Spanish cinema in the spotlight at San Sebastian Film Festival**

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The public has until Oct. 19 to file comments about the plan via a website set up by the coalition. Groups including SEED and the Sierra Club also expect to file lawsuits prior to the Oct. 29 deadline for court filings.

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Fort Worth is on proposed route if U.S. nuclear waste is sent to West Texas

Written by

Jeff Mosier, Energy and Environment Writer

Connect with Jeff Mosier

Used nuclear fuel could pass by downtown Fort Worth on its way to a high-level radioactive waste dump in West Texas, according to a proposal from Dallas-based Waste Control Specialists.

That's according to a map of the proposed route recently made public by environmental activists opposing the plan by a joint venture that includes Waste Control Specialists and Orano USA.

The joint venture known as Interim Storage Partners is seeking a permit from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to store high-level radioactive waste, from nuclear power plants across the country, at its Andrews County facility. The permit is pending and would need the approval of federal regulators.

Although the proposed route would miss Dallas, opponents said the Union Pacific rail line running through downtown Dallas would be the most straightforward way to transport the used nuclear fuel from dozens of other plants to the east. The routes are only proposed and would need the approval of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"The shipments would take over 20 years to move across the country and come to Texas," said Karen Hadden, executive director of the Austin-based Sustainable Energy & Economic Development (SEED) Coalition, referring to the nuclear waste currently stored in different parts of the country. "And we're afraid that once it got here, it would never leave."

This Dallas company wants the feds to bury nuclear waste in West Texas
Spent nuclear fuel is currently stored at each plant, awaiting a permanent home. The West Texas site is proposed for interim storage — potentially for decades — while the federal government figures out a longer-term solution.

Thomas Graham, a spokesman for Interim Storage Partners, said this type of transportation has been used for more than 50 years with no accidents leading to a release of radiation. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has calculated that there is a 1-in-a-billion chance of radiation release from a transportation accident, said Curtis Roberts, a spokesman for Orano USA.

Opponents acknowledge that the risk of a radiation release is small, but the consequences could be devastating. They point to concerns about accidents and terrorist attacks.

Documents from Interim Storage Partners argue that it's more dangerous to have nuclear material stored at more than 70 locations around the nation.

Representatives of environmental groups — including the Nuclear Information Resource Service — are touring Texas and trying to rally opposition to the Andrews County proposal. A large part of their argument is that the nuclear material traveling through Texas via rail is too risky.

The proposed route publicized this week shows nuclear waste from the Maine Yankee nuclear power plant, which closed more than 20 years ago, going through the Midwest, down to Fort Worth and then west to Andrews County.

The Dallas County Commissioners Court in April adopted a resolution opposing the transportation of nuclear waste through the region. Similar resolutions have been approved by San Antonio and Bexar and Nueces counties.

At a Thursday news conference, adjacent to a rail line in downtown Dallas, the chief of staff for Dallas County Commissioner Theresa Daniel read a statement saying: "Our lives, land and aquifers must be protected from radioactive contamination which could result from accidents, radiation releases or leaks, or potential terrorist actions."
Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins planned to attend to lend his support but a scheduling conflict interfered. Officials with Fort Worth and Tarrant County did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Roberts said the "casks" that would transport the nuclear waste go through extensive testing sequences. They are dropped 30 feet onto hard ground. Then they go through a puncture test. They are burned at high temperatures. And they are finally submerged in water.

Interim Storage Partners documents acknowledge that some routes might have risks that could exceed the tolerances — such as higher falls. In those cases, a different route is chosen.

This effort to find a temporary storage site started in 2015 and is expected to continue for several years. Waste Control Specialists' 14,900-acre facility near the Texas-New Mexico border is already permitted to store low-level radioactive waste.

The deadline for submitting public comments to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is Oct. 19. Email comments should go to WCS_CISF_EIS@nrc.gov. By mail, comments should be addressed to May Ma, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: TWFN-7-A60M, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001.

Tour renews call against transport of nuclear waste

By Simone Jasper, MRT.com/Midland Reporter-Telegram
Published 7:54 pm CDT, Saturday, September 29, 2018

An inflatable life-size model of casks used to transport nuclear waste material is displayed Saturday near the intersection of Main Street and Industrial Avenue. Among those speaking were Margaret Hiett Williams, from left, chair of the Midland County Democratic Party; Karen Hadden, executive director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Coalition; Diane D'Arrigo, radioactive waste project
A tour opposing the transportation of high-level radioactive waste made a stop Saturday in Midland. With railroad tracks in the background, organizers spoke out against a proposed plan to bring used nuclear fuel via train to a site in Andrews County.

“We’re on this tour to let people know that the radioactive proposal is moving forward again and the risks that it could bring to their communities,” said Karen Hadden, executive director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition.

Hadden joined others who raised awareness about the possible transport as part of the Protect Texas from Radioactive Waste Tour. A press conference near the corner of South Main Street and East Industrial Avenue featured an inflatable model of a container for the waste.

“We’re hoping that the cask that we’re bringing around — which is a full-scale, mock transport cask — will let people know the size and magnitude of these shipments,” Hadden said.

The push to oppose the possible transport comes after the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission said it would review a license application for Interim Storage Partners, a venture between Waste Control Specialists and Orano USA.

If the plan receives approval, it would involve bringing nuclear waste from sites across the country for interim storage in Andrews County. More than 2,700 shipments have been transported in a safe manner since 1965, according to ISP’s website.

“Used nuclear fuel is transported safely every day all around the world with no radiological release caused by a transportation accident, and has been for 50 years,” ISP spokesman Thomas Graham wrote in an email.

Locally, David Rosen during Saturday’s event said he considers possible risks associated with transportation via train. He said that even if casks don’t break, he is concerned they will emit radiation.
“You can see how close all these buildings are to the railroad tracks,” Rosen said. “It’s just horrible to think that high-level nuclear waste is going to be coming through the heart of Midland.”

The Midland County Commissioners’ Court last year passed a resolution stating it recognizes residents oppose the transport of high-level nuclear waste through the community. The resolution also detailed that commissioners don’t have authority over nuclear waste travel and that they would convey questions to the federal government when the topic arose.

The county joined other local entities around the state that made similar resolutions regarding the transportation of nuclear waste. In Midland, Rosen said people of various political backgrounds spoke out against proposed transport before the commissioners’ decision.

“That resolution is of importance to help sway our federal government to not bring it through because the reality is that the federal government has the control,” Rosen said. Hadden said Midlanders can submit to the NRC public comments about the proposed transport. Deadline to do is Oct. 19. Residents also have options to ask for public meetings, request an extended timeline or take legal intervention, according to Hadden.

Though she delivered a similar message in Midland during the last application process, she said the upcoming deadline brings urgency to this month’s tour. Hadden said nuclear waste transportation poses risks from leaks, accidents or sabotage.

“We think that it should never be moved until and unless it’s going to a permanent repository,” Hadden said. “It makes no sense to create this interim storage facility because the waste can stay right where it is.”

Saturday’s tour stop was wedged among appearances in Dallas, El Paso, San Antonio and Andrews. Organizers included the SEED Coalition, Beyond Nuclear, Nuclear Information and Resource Service and Public Citizen.

**Want to be involved?**

For information about submitting a public comment to the NRC, visit nrc.gov/public-involve/doc-comment.html.

Group meets in Midland to protest nuclear waste in West Texas

By Matthew Alvarez |
Posted: Sat 11:07 PM, Sep 29, 2018

MIDLAND -- A group of West Texans met in the Tall City Saturday afternoon, to speak out against a waste dump proposal that would bring radioactive waste through West Texas.

They gathered in Downtown Midland with signs and an inflatable nuclear waste container.

Waste Control Specialists wants to bring in by rail 40,000 tons of irradiated fuel rods from nuclear reactors around the country to store at their existing waste site.

One woman at the event explains why it's so dangerous to have radioactive waste in West Texas. “This is what you hear about in the big suits, when they try to deal with problems like Fukushima, or where we've had meltdowns before like in the three-mile islands or Chernobyl. This is the most dangerous of all radioactive waste,” said Karen Hadden, Clean Air and Clean Energy Advocate.
The public has until October 19th to speak up about the plan to dump the radioactive waste in West Texas.

**Group in Midland protest possible radioactive waste transportation**

By: Caleb Califano


Midland, Texas (Big 2/Fox 24) - This Saturday a group gathered in Midland to protest a proposal to bring in high-level radioactive waste possibly through Midland.

"People need to know the risk of high-level radioactive waste," says Karen Hadden, the Executive Director of the SEED Coalition. "Waste Control Specialist wants to bring in 40 thousand tons, of the most radioactive waste."
WCS is located in the western part of Andrews County. Protestors say they aren't just worried about the radioactive waste. A big problem they say is how it could get there: on the tracks right through Midland.

"It's very likely that the waste would come on this route," says Hadden. "It was part of the routes designated where there was a Yucca Mountain repository."

At the protest was also Kerstin Rudek from Gorleben, Germany. She said she understood this problem first hand, after her town became a hotspot for high-level nuclear waste decades ago.

"The caste of high-radioactive waste will bring cancer to your communities, and other very serious illnesses," says Rudek.

Radioactive waste has always been a topic of controversy. But on Saturday protesters showed what side they're on with this issue.

"This could be billions of dollars. It could contaminate the whole region, it could get into water, and into the oil fields. We don't want that happening," says Hadden.

The group says that people have until October 19th to voice their concern to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission regarding the possible transportation of nuclear waste.


Community members warn of risks in potential radioactive waste storage near Andrews

Saturday, September 29th 2018, 7:04 pm CDT

By Mariana Veloso, Digital Content Producer

CONNECT
MIDLAND, TX (KWES) -

The public has until October 19 to comment on the storage of 40,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste in Andrews.

Consolidated Interim Storage proposal of Waste Control Specialists (WCS) and Orano seeks to set up an above ground storage of this material. Their license application must first be approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

The public has until October 29 to intervene on the application.

Local community members, Public Citizen, Sustainable Energy & Economic Development (SEED) Coalition and Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) held a press conference near railroad tracks to point out the risks of accidents, leaks or terrorist actions if the waste is transported through Midland.

“The least risky approach is to leave it where it is and to build better, safer casks and containers, not to ship it across the country. If they need to move it a little ways that’s fine, but there is no reason to bring it here and dump it on us,” Karen Hadden, No Nuclear Waste organization, said.

If approved, WCS will bring in irradiated fuel rods and store them at their low-level radioactive waste site from 40 to 100 years.

“The technologies we intend to employ are state of the art and will ensure the safety of the community where we also live and work as well as communities along the ultimate transportation routes,” Thomas Graham, speaking on behalf of the Interim Storage facility Waste Control Specialist, said.

For more information and a template comment letter, click here.

For more about Nuclear Regulatory Commission, click here.

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El Paso

Plan to store radioactive waste in West Texas reemerges

Nuclear waste could be transported through El Paso

Posted: Sep 29, 2018 10:57 PM MDT
Updated: Oct 01, 2018 01:44 AM MDT
El Paso, TX - A Texas radioactive waste storage plan is back.


ADVERTISING

A proposal last year to send nuclear fuel to West Texas for temporary storage was put on hold. Now, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission restarted its review of the application.

This is according to Diane D'arrigo, who is the project director for a nuclear resource center based in Washington, D.C.

She wants to warn El Paso of the dangers of shipping high level nuclear waste across the country.

The proposed site is "Waste Control Specialists", an existing hazardous waste site in Andrews County. Some of the radioactive waste would be transported by trains that cross through El Paso.

D'arrigo believes there is a potential health risk that comes with the transport.
She told ABC-7, "If this were a real cask, and we had irradiated fuel in it, you would be able to detect radioactivity for a half mile in all directions around that cask. And there are legal levels for radioactivity but they are not safe levels, there are no safe levels."

According to the website for ISP -- the company submitting the application to transport -- it has been transporting nuclear waste safely since 1965.

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El Paso Times (great video)

Opponents of a proposed radioactive waste facility in West Texas made a stop in El Paso as part of a statewide tour.

Several groups expressed concerns about the transportation of canisters of radioactive waste via rail cars to a proposed facilities near Andrews, Texas, and across the state line in New Mexico.

Andrews is about 35 miles north of Odessa.

The Protect Texas from Radioactive Waste Tour had a news conference Friday near railroad tracks in Downtown El Paso to voice concern about the plan, which they say would transport giant canisters full of radioactive rods via rail car from nuclear power plants located around the country.
The Protect Texas from Radioactive Waste Tour press conference included from left: Diane D’Arrigo, Kerstin Rudek, Karen Hadden, Guillermo Glenn, Hilda Villegas and Tom Smith.  *(Photo: Rudy Gutierrez)*

The state-wide tour, put on by SEED Coalition, Public Citizen, Beyond Nuclear was joined in El Paso by Familias Unidas del Chamizal and cited the risk of accidents, leaks or terrorism if the waste is transported through densely populated centers.

The tour warns that the public has until Oct. 19 to voice concerns about the plan to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The group provided the website [www.NoNuclearWaste.org](http://www.NoNuclearWaste.org) for more information.

**More:** [Chihuahuan Desert Fiesta offers insight on nature at Franklin Mountains State Park](http://www.chihuahuan.org)