

Comments on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the MOX Application 4/08/03

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(28)

1. The primary flaw of the NRC's DEIS process is that it splits the MOX application into two parts — construction and operation — but the **operations data is not subject to review**. Environmental aspects of both must be considered. Most alarmingly, the NRC plans to sign off on its environmental review before operational plans are developed to safeguard 34 tons of plutonium during MOX processing. To separate construction and operation, and to not review critical aspects to contain the highly dangerous plutonium, is irresponsible and blatantly wrong (and is being legally challenged by GANE).
2. The DEIS was published containing large computer errors miscalculating how **high death counts in low-income, minority communities** would be from a severe MOX accident. Although the NRC is preparing new environmental justice data, its public meetings will take place before the public is in possession of accurate data on which to comment. It should be mandatory for the NRC to hold additional meetings subsequent to releasing the correct data ... especially in North Augusta which is in the most highly affected area from the proposed MOX activity at SRS.
3. The DEIS fails to address the **reasonable alternative to MOX — plutonium immobilization**. Immobilization would effectively achieve the MOX program's stated goal to safeguard weapons-grade plutonium. Continued storage, which the NRC analyzed instead of immobilization, is, conversely, an acknowledged security risk. The immobilization alternative compares favorably with MOX in other ways: large number of jobs provided; effective management for existing waste stocks at SRS; negligible waste stream as compared to MOX; cheaper than MOX. The public demands to see the in-depth comparison between MOX and immobilization which is required to satisfy NEPA.
4. The DEIS fails to analyze **weaknesses in Catawba and McGuire's ice condenser-type reactors**, currently proposed to use the MOX fuel. The ice condenser design has a thin containment which is more likely to rupture in the case of a severe accident. Additionally, severe accidents are more likely with MOX fuel use. The DEIS must address these reactor-related MOX risks in its analysis.
5. The DEIS fails to acknowledge the possibility of **insufficient reactors in the MOX program** to keep pace with the proposed MOX production rate. Two or three additional reactors would be required to process the proposed volume of MOX fuel. The DEIS must state the environmental risks from failure to process plutonium to MOX, or conversely, excessive inventory of fresh MOX fuel containing weapons-grade plutonium, an extra security risk.
6. The DEIS evaluates a proposal by Duke Cogema Stone & Webster (DCS, the applicant) for the Department of Energy (DOE) to build a special waste building to handle the **significant volume of highly radioactive liquid MOX wastes**. DOE has not yet generated any records or budget requests indicating acceptance of the MOX waste plan. The DEIS must discuss the environmental risks and consequences of DOE failure to implement MOX waste management.
7. Sabotage and terrorism have become increasingly common in recent years. The DEIS must analyze **environmental risks from sabotage, malevolent acts, or terrorist attacks** to: the MOX facility; reactors using MOX; transports of fresh fuel to reactors; or transports of plutonium to SRS. MOX, by involving weapons-grade plutonium, is an intrinsic security risk, and must be considered to have a strong attraction to terrorists. Absence of analysis of this environmental risk hampers efforts of public health authorities to respond to emergencies posed by potential security breaches.

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