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More on above-ground storage casks

Dear Editor,

My name is Kenneth Richards. I'm writing you concerning the placement of above ground, VSC-24 nuclear fuel rod storage casks at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant, not five miles from my home here in South Haven Township. This action gives me much pause for concern. In lieu of the facts, this is being done without an environmental impact statement, cost/benefit analysis or adequate public review. State Attorney General Frank Kelley held hearings, but these were not the public hearings the NRC, DOE or EPA guidelines call for. This storage cask issue has been fast-tracked around the usual public oversight practices. An environmental law suit filed in a Grand Rapids court by the State Attorney General and concerned groups has just been denied. Judge Robert Bell ruling he did not have jurisdiction in the matter. The suit is now being appealed to a federal court in Ohio. I hope your office will take a strong interest in this lawsuit's outcome and help see to it that it gets the proper hearing that it deserves. Unlike Governor Engler when I call or write his office concerning this vital issue. Like Judge Bell, he is claiming this nuclear fuel-rod cask issue is a federal matter, that leaves you and our representatives in Washington. Hopefully, you will help in making the courts and Michigan's Governor take a

responsible change of course on the issue, rather than trying to pass the buck to the feds, as seems to be happening here. Or will your office do the same?

Just two years ago, I was employed by Essential Services E.S. Inc. on behalf of Consumers Power Company, as a Temporary Decontamination Worker (Rad Pro), and in 1971-72, I was a construction laborer on the Donald C. Cook Nuclear Power generating plant at Bridgman. Both occupations, in addition to being a union painter, I plan to pursue in the future, so please don't consider me simply an anti-nuke or a person with an environmental ax to grind. My work in the industry, both here and in Colorado, clued me into the fact that not just Palisades is wrestling with the problems of high level waste storage or having a waste storage facility to ship the waste product to. It is a national concern which every utility dependent on nuclear generation will be facing in the very near future.

In the military industrial complexes this problem has been more intense over the past decade. An example is the nuclear weapon manufacturing plants such as Rocky Flats, located in Golden, Colorado, where Governor Roy Romer had Colorado's Dept. of Health and Safety shut down their waste generating production. This was done as the company was seeking risky on-site solutions such as

incineration or compaction of nuclear or toxic wastes. This was done, in part, due to DOE's high and low level waste facilities such as the one in Idaho surpassing capacity, and I feel that Governor Cecil Andrus of that state made a proper stand by shutting off shipments from Rocky Flats or any other out of state waste generating plant. This was five years ago and now the same problem has come to my home in South Haven at the Palisades plant in Covert Township. I saw it coming and expected better from the NRC, DOE, my government and my community. I have seen too many things go wrong within the nuclear industry and seen them be less than forthcoming with information to the public. In general I feel these casks will do the job they are intended to if handled properly. Let's hope one is not dropped or mishandled and that they're up to specifications, for the consequences of nuclear contamination is health threatening and expensive. Just having these casks in close proximity to Lake Michigan should give reasonable citizens pause for concern. It does me. How long will they remain on their pad, 150 yards from the lake?

As I understand it, the industry hopes that in 1997 new storage capacities should become available at some unspecified high-level facility and by 2010, there will be a national high-level nuclear fuel-rod waste site available to all nuclear

generating plants. My Colorado experience tells me it could be a lot longer than that. Every year that goes by, as the number of these casks goes up, (projected at 80 at the moment), the greater the chance one of these casks may not work as designed or expected. Devices such as reactors and waste storage units have failed to live up to the claims made for them by both the industry and government too many times in the past. Accidents happen and promises are not lived up to. The fact is, no one really knows for certain what we're going to do with all of this high and low-level nuclear waste. Yet we go on generating huge amounts of it. To use a term, the problem "has reached critical mass in the United States."

I can clearly see that immediate nuclear decommission, clean up and conversion of the Palisades Nuclear Power plant and running on natural gas or hydrogen fuel is the way it must go, rather than allowing these nuclear fuel-rod storage casks to pile up on the site. We already have contaminated steam generators and such buried on site along with a contaminated plant to deal with. Enough! The time to convert Palisades Nuclear Power Plant is now.

Sincerely,
Kenneth Richards
South Haven

penings

Palisades

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of providing equal time. We well come it, I suppose. The first storage cask has been loaded, and put outside onto a fenced-in storage pad near the plant, he said, after a six-day process. The plant hopes to load its second cask and not permanent, he says. A Palisades spokesman said the permanent waste disposal site, to make sure the storage is temporary, the federal government to find a permanent waste disposal site, to make sure the storage is temporary, the federal government to find a permanent waste disposal site, to make sure the storage is temporary.

Ken Richards

7-28-05