



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

August 24, 1992

The Honorable Fife Symington
Governor of Arizona
Chairman
Western Governors' Association
600 17th Street
Suite 1705 South Tower
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Governor Symington:

I am pleased to acknowledge your July 27, 1992 letter transmitting the Western Governors' Association's (WGA) Policy Resolution on Storage of Spent Commercial Nuclear Reactor Fuel. The Commission appreciates your informing us of the WGA's policy resolution and believes that the leadership and support of the WGA can help carry out the national policy for permanent, safe, geologic disposal of spent nuclear reactor fuel.

With regard to the WGA's support for NRC adoption of "a statement of confidence in at-reactor passive storage," the Commission made the following findings of reasonable assurance on spent fuel storage in September 1990, during its periodic review of the Waste Confidence Decision (55 FR 38472, September 18, 1990):

- Spent fuel will be managed in a safe manner until sufficient repository capacity is available to assure the safe disposal of all spent fuel.
- If necessary, spent fuel can be stored safely and without significant environmental impacts for at least 30 years beyond the licensed period of life for operation (which may include the term of a revised or renewed license) of any reactor in its spent fuel storage basin or at either onsite or offsite independent spent fuel storage installations (ISFSIs).
- Safe independent onsite spent fuel storage or offsite spent fuel storage will be made available if such storage capacity is needed.

The Commission's conclusions with respect to the safety and environmental impact of extended storage are also supported by NRC's Environmental Assessment (EA) for 10 CFR Part 72 rulemaking, "Licensing Requirements for the Independent Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste" (53 FR 31651, August 19, 1988). Licensing and operational experience, as well as studies of extended pool storage, continue to demonstrate that such storage provides a relatively benign environment for spent fuel which does not significantly accelerate degradation of spent fuel integrity. To date, experience with dry storage of spent fuel demonstrates that dry storage systems are simple, passive and easily maintained. NRC staff safety reviews

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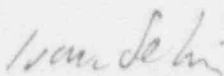
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of topical reports on dry storage system designs and dry storage installations at four reactor sites, as well as the EA for Part 72, support the finding that storage of spent fuel in such installations for a period of up to 70 years does not significantly affect the environment.

It is important to emphasize, however, the Commission's paramount support for the timely, permanent disposal of spent fuel and high-level waste in a geologic repository. The Commission's 1990 Waste Confidence Decision found reasonable assurance that at least one such repository will be available within the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Thus, while our findings on safe storage are important, the Commission does not endorse storage of spent fuel for an indefinite period.

I want to assure you that the Commission continues to be interested in the WGA's views. We recognize the importance to the WGA of the spent fuel storage issue and would welcome additional dialogue if you wish to pursue the subject further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ivan Selin".

Ivan Selin



UNITED STATES
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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

August 24, 1992

CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Bob Miller
Governor of Nevada
Vice Chairman
Western Governors' Association
600 17th Street
Suite 1705 South Tower
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Governor Miller:

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