

JAN 13 2000

MR. HADDER: Good evening. My name is John Hadder. I work with Citizen Alert. And I wasn't actually planning to speak this evening, but as a result of a question and answer period earlier it prompted me, because I thought this was an important comment that pertains to the process by which the hearing was held that jeopardizes the entire EIS process, underpins, perhaps, the methodology the Department of Energy is pursuing.

1 I wasn't the person who asked the question that didn't get answered. I don't know who was here earlier. But the question, the specific question was would the new setting guidelines, would the changes, the changes in the guidelines affect the design of the repository. To me this seems a perfectly germane question because it pertains to impacts that could occur, and these setting guidelines have been in the process of evolving for quite some time. So there was plenty of time to complete this earlier, in my opinion.

The point I want to make is that if the Department of Energy is going to have a question and answer period, then the employees should answer the questions or not and not defer them. Perhaps it doesn't look good to not answer a question. If you don't know the answer, then don't answer it. Instead of getting -- instead of getting put off and saying that your question is irrelevant, I'm sure that could happen, but I believe it's really germane to the EIS process.

This same kind of thing happened in Las Vegas. A young man had asked whether a transportation cask were designed to withstand a terrorist directed weapon. This is an armor-piercing type weapon. The panel again deferred, saying refer to page so-and-so in the document, did not answer his question. They could have very well answered his question. These people have studied this thing, know whether they're designed for that. Of course they're not designed for that.

The point is, my point is that they didn't answer the question directly. What is emerging here is a pattern, and the pattern appears to be that if a truthful answer to the question will compromise the perception of the safety of the proposed action, that is, a dump at the Yucca Mountain site, then an indirect and evasive answer is a result.

This is a very dangerous pattern. I hope this is not really what's happening, but it looks that way for people in the public. It looked that way to me tonight and it looked that way to the young man in Las Vegas, and I've seen it on other occasions. This is part of the reason why the Department of Energy has a credibility problem. Very, a very big piece of it.

2 It appears as though the Department of Energy is in a direct way advocating for Yucca Mountain. I hope that's not the case. It shouldn't be the case. Such advocacy does not, is not the role the Department of Energy here. The object is to study this mountain. This is a required by the National Environmental Policy Act and the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

The purpose of the whole process is to explore Yucca Mountain as a possible -- as a possible site and elicit public comment to achieve a safe method of handling high-level nuclear waste, not to convince the public that Yucca Mountain is the site.

So I wanted to enter this in the record because I think this pertains to the EIS process and how we're getting information. And so that's all the comment I have to make, and I certainly hope that this is not the case, and I would certainly hope I don't see this in the future. Thank you very much.