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Dr. Jane Summerson, EIS Document Manager (M/S 010)
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
DOE - Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

Dear Dr. Summerson,

1. Regarding the transportation of nuclear waste through Missouri to Idaho and Nevada: I am aware of the need to keep radioactive materials out of the hands of foreign and East Coast terrorists, although it seems to me that native terrorists operate in those western states, too. However, as a resident of Webster Groves, Missouri, I oppose the proposed numerous shipments of nuclear materials through my community via truck and rail. As it has been reported that once the Yucca Mt. site is active the nuclear waste shipments will be routed through the metropolitan St. Louis area, I want these future shipments either stopped or rerouted through low-population areas. My reasons follow.

2. 1. According to the 12/22/97 issue of DER SPIEGEL, the projected total amount of radioactive waste to be transported, over the next couple of decades through my community, just from the American East Coast reactors, to Idaho and Nevada, amounts to the radioactive equivalent of 2,300,000 Hiroshima-size atomic bombs.

You know that we cannot plan safely for all events; we are not wise enough to foresee all possibilities, especially in complex situations like this one. We accept that "Keep it simple, stupid" means reducing complexity so that there are fewer chances for error and for disaster. We must plan for disasters as if they were certainties by routing dangers through areas least affected by such unpredictable disasters. That wise course of action seems to be not fully in effect:

3... On the evening of June 27th at 7:01 PM three truckloads of radioactive nuclear waste from Germany entered metropolitan St. Louis and became entrapped in an unpredicted, localized lightening storm/cloudburst that dumped more than four inches of rain in two hours on the trucks and their state police escorts. Due to the hazardous driving conditions the vehicles had to pull off the road for an hour and a half until the blinding rains let up. From my local driving experience that was a wise decision for several reasons, one of which is seldom mentioned: many drivers in this area disregard hydroplaning and actually speed up and

3 cont. take greater risks changing lanes at the beginnings of downpours and snowfalls. This is idiotic but true. Do you take this unlikely driving behavior into account?

4 Recent local train accidents make the rail solution also untenable. For, example, here in the city of Webster Groves 14 carloads of coal overturned this May 31st due to an unlikely broken axle on one of the cars, spilling more than 2,500,000 pounds of cargo into a residential area. I'm sure the likelihood of such a broken axle was extremely small and was seen as an acceptable risk. If that train had been carrying highly radioactive nuclear waste from the East Coast, Webster Groves would have become another Times Beach disaster, only larger and more permanent.

I am sure you are also aware of the runaway train carrying hazardous materials that traveled through two counties in Ohio before being stopped this past May 15th. That incident was not in the plan.

5 I question the wisdom of routing of these trucks and trains near population centers due to the many unpredictable risks near such centers. The huge amounts of radioactive poisons present in the cargo, some of it in gaseous form under a lot of pressure, could harm so many people here. Not only the thousands of thoughtless adult drivers, but the millions of innocent children whose lives are entrusted to us for safekeeping.

6 2. It is wise to "leave well enough alone" until we better understand the bigger picture. The radioactive wastes should be left where they are now until more is known about the safety of their final resting place and the safety of transporting highly energetic nuclear materials through the highly energetic atmosphere of the Earth.

7... Movement of large concentrations of radioactive materials may interfere with normal sub-atomic atmospheric dynamics to the extent of causing weather and climate extremes. While radioactive atomic and molecular gases have been suggested as agents of weather and climate change in work such as "Meteorological Consequences of Atmospheric Krypton-85" (SCIENCE, vol. 193, #4249, 7/16/76), sub-atomic radioactive interactions and their effects in the field (rather than the lab) are just beginning to be explored. The physics sub-atomic world of "strings," etc. is like the biology sub-viral world of "prions." Mad Cow disease (and possibly AIDS, another "wasting" disease) are poorly understood, but real nevertheless. We ignore "prions" at our peril. I think that we should not ignore the possibility that the cloudburst that drenched the three trucks here in St. Louis last week was an effect of the movement of the material. It is anecdotal, but real, that in the last three years nearly all local

7 cont. tornadoes have formed over the Weldon Springs nuclear storage dump where truckloads of radioactive materials from downtown St. Louis and from the airport have moved during that time. Energetic actions at a distance are the meat of modern physics. We should be looking at the pragmatic energetic effects of the movement of these immensely energetic radioactive materials, before moving huge amounts of them.

If due to tangible terrorist dangers the materials must be moved, then I would suggest as a precaution moving the materials at night and during the winter months when the atmosphere is less energetically active -and on a sparsely populated route. |

Sincerely yours,



John Wilder

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