

**NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS
IN DOE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS:
THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TRANSPORTATION FORUM**

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ABSTRACT

The Senior Executive Transportation Forum was established by former Energy Secretary Peña in January 1998 to coordinate the efforts of Departmental elements involved in the transportation of radioactive materials and waste. The forum is made up of senior managers and executives from the Offices of Environmental Management; Defense Programs; Civilian Radioactive Waste Management; Nuclear Energy; Naval Reactors; Environment, Safety, and Health; Field Management; Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs; Public Affairs; Non-proliferation and National Security; Energy Research; and Fissile Materials Disposition. The Department of Energy's (DOE) field offices are represented by the Albuquerque Operations Office.

Leadership for the Forum is a rotating chair which is currently provided by Environmental Management. The approach to business of the Forum is formal consensus-building and decision-making. The Director of the Office of Transportation and Emergency Management serves as the permanent Secretariat.

FORUM BEGINNINGS

Genesis of the Senior Executive Transportation Forum was widespread stakeholder concerns about the Department's transportation activities, particularly transportation of radioactive materials and waste:

- Perceived fragmentation in transportation planning and implementation and the involvement of stakeholders
- Stakeholders' desire for timely information on shipments and routes
- Needs for emergency preparedness planning and training
- Demonstration of continued packaging and shipment safety
- Multiple concerns driven by the expectation of increased shipping frequency.

APPROACH

The Forum's approach is to focus on key issues emerging from the Department's shipping activities and stakeholder interest and concerns about these activities. This focus is multifaceted and includes the common packaging and transportation technical issues across the Department. The goal is a more integrated approach to issue resolution, planning, and shipping. Key to its integrated efforts are better communications, relations, and cooperation with state, tribal, and local governments. The Department will provide better information on the priority concerns about routing, emergency management, and pre-shipment notification.

CURRENT ISSUES

In resolving issues, the Forum assigns specific action items to its managers who are typically champions for these issues. The assigned champions provide regular status reports and issue papers for Forum consideration and approval. Issues are prioritized, and specific due dates are set. Officially adopted issues and action items include:

- Improving Relationships with the Department of Transportation
- Public Outreach and Communication
- Single Point of Contact
- Transportation Information Network
- Emergency Response Training
- Packaging Safety and Quality Control
- Stakeholder Funding and Technical Assistance
- Standardized Transportation Protocols

PROGRESS TO DATE

The Forum has been highly successful in getting segments of the Department together to focus on key transportation issues in a disciplined way. Several action items have been completed:

Improved relationships with the Department of Transportation (DOT) are a reality. A senior manager from the DOT has agreed to participate as an Ex-Officio member of the Forum. More person-to-person contacts with both management and staff are now taking place.

Public outreach and communication has been improved through publishing a brochure, *Transporting Radioactive Materials Safely: Guide to DOE Transportation*. The handy single-page foldout provides a wealth of information on how and what the Department ships and how these shipments fit into its multiple missions. The brochure provides points of contact and internet addresses for more detailed program and mission information. It also provides a picture of how the Department is organized for emergency response and radiological assistance.

A single point of contact has been established as an entry point into the Department for information on transporting radioactive materials and waste. People may **call (202) 586-8142** for

a response by a real person! That person will either provide the Department's response or make sure someone else does. The foldout brochure has this phone number.

ONGOING WORK

A number of activities have been assigned champions and are progressing on a less urgent basis. These initiatives are in various states of completion:

A Transportation Information Network has been proposed to provide more publicly accessible information about scheduled shipments of radioactive materials and waste. This information has been requested by numerous stakeholders including state, tribal, and local governments. New information has now been added to the Department's web site, providing a 12-month forecast of upcoming shipments. This web site is updated monthly.

Emergency response training and the adequacy of preparedness has been a longstanding stakeholder issue. State, tribal, and local emergency managers are concerned about the training standards for radiological incidents and identifying the numbers and location of people trained. The Department is pursuing a national consensus standard for training requirements. This standard will be developed through the National Fire Protection Association and will take several years to develop. The idea of a national training registry has been rejected because of the cost involved.

Packaging safety and quality control is a Forum action undertaken as a result of a leaking radioactive waste package incident near Kingman, Arizona, in December 1997. The Department issued a report on improving packaging in April 1998. Many of the report's recommendations have now been implemented, and others are in various stages of implementation.

Stakeholder funding and technical assistance, particularly for transportation and emergency preparedness, is being provided by many organizations within the Department. A more coordinated and integrated way of providing both funding and assistance has appealing arguments and could simplify how the Department does business. An effort is now underway for capturing all funds for these activities under an "umbrella" grant in the FY2000 budget process.

TRANSPORTATION PROTOCOLS – A PRIORITY ISSUE

Background

The DOE's operating programs currently employ a number of different protocols and practices for shipping radioactive materials and wastes, consistent with applicable laws and regulations. To a large degree, these differences derive from the broad range of hazards associated with different types of materials and wastes. For example, spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste shipments (which contain higher levels of radioactivity) require different handling than low-level radioactive waste shipments to properly protect health, safety, and the environment. In addition,

some radioactive material shipments involve national security materials with special safeguarding requirements.

The Issue to be Addressed

DOE has a good record of conducting shipments safely under existing protocols and practices. Nevertheless, stakeholders have expressed concern about the lack of uniformity in the Department's shipping protocols and practices and the lack of clear communication of the reasons for these differences in such protocols and practices.

Purpose of the Initiative

To address these stakeholder concerns, DOE's Senior Executive Transportation Forum is undertaking an initiative to identify and evaluate the shipping protocols and practices being used. Differences identified will be analyzed to determine whether protocols and practices can and should be made uniform. Where it is appropriate, DOE will standardize transportation protocols and practices among DOE elements for various types of radioactive material and waste. DOE will provide an explanation of the reasons where standardization is determined not to be appropriate.

Phased Evaluation Process

In undertaking this effort, DOE recognizes the importance of communication with and input from state, tribal, and local governments and other interested stakeholders. Therefore, opportunities for frequent interactions with, and meaningful input from, stakeholders will be provided.

DOE recognizes that Memoranda of Agreement concerning shipping practices for certain radioactive materials either already exist or are being developed. If this evaluation determines that any aspect of these Agreements warrants potential modification, such determinations will be discussed with the parties to the Agreements. Otherwise, existing Agreements will be unaffected by this process.

DOE plans to conduct this initiative in the following four phases:

- **Phase I:** Compile information on current protocols and practices. The 17 protocol areas listed in the table below are being evaluated. DOE will share this information with stakeholders to obtain input on the process to evaluate protocols and practices and on issues DOE should consider.

- **Phase II:** Analyze the compiled protocol and practice information, including input from stakeholders, to determine where standardization might be appropriate. Share preliminary evaluations with various stakeholder groups to obtain their input.
- **Phase III:** Identify proposed protocols and practices where DOE considers standardization to be appropriate and desirable. Identify the degree of standardization to be pursued. Where standardization is not considered to be appropriate, explain why different protocols and practices are necessary. Issue these results in a draft protocols and practices document for public comment.
- **Phase IV:** Evaluate and incorporate stakeholder input and issue a final protocols and practices document. Distribute the completed document to involved stakeholders.

Protocol Areas	
Pre-Notification	Tracking
Emergency plans	Weather/road conditions
Routing	Safe parking/safe haven
Inspections	Accident notification
Public information	Emergency response
Carrier/driver reqs.	Crisis communication
Training	Remediation
Security	Post-shipment
Equipment	

DOE intends to periodically update the protocols and practices document for accuracy, completeness, and continued compliance with laws and regulations. As preparations are made for new DOE radioactive material and waste shipments, the sites will discuss with stakeholders planned protocols and practices for new shipments. Protocols and practices for new shipping campaigns will be incorporated into the protocols and practices document.

SUMMARY

The Senior Executive Transportation Forum is indeed providing a new and widely supported focus on the difficult issues surrounding radioactive materials transport. Under the leadership of Environmental Management's Office of Site Operations, issues are being addressed and decisions made. Bringing the Department's diverse mission and support elements together at an executive level has demonstrated a resolve to consider and respond to legitimate stakeholder concerns. After a year of activity, the Forum remains energized and is promoting integration, coordination, and cohesion. Its outlook is very positive!