

WM2008 Conference Panel Reports

Session 11

Panel: Hot Topics and Emerging Issues in US Commercial Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management

Panel Reporter: Kathryn V. Haynes, Southeast Compact Commission for Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management

This panel focused on emerging issues in commercial low-level radioactive waste in the U.S. from the perspective of six active members of the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Forum, Inc. The panel included updates on capacity of existing disposal facilities, licensing of new facilities for storage and disposal, and disposal of NORM and TENORM at hazardous waste facilities.

The following individuals participated in the panel:

- Rodney Baltzer, President, Waste Control Specialists
- Michael H. Mobley, Chair, Southeast Compact Commission for Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management
- Larry Camper, Director, Division of WM & EP, US Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- Steve Creamer, President and CEO, EnergySolutions
- Scott Zoller, Radiation Safety Officer, Clean Harbors Environmental Services
- Kevin McCarthy, Connecticut Commissioner, Atlantic Compact Commission

New Facilities for Storage and Disposal in Texas – Rodney Baltzer, President, Waste Control Specialists, provided an update on a pending license application in Texas for a Texas Compact waste facility and a federal waste disposal facility. The application has gone through technical review and is expected to go to public comment in March 2008. A final license is expected by July 2009, with operation of the facilities by July 2010. The commercial low-level waste facility will be controlled by the Texas Compact, whereas the federal facility will be market-driven.

In a partnership with Studsvik, Waste Control Specialists also plans to apply for a license amendment to augment their storage of Class B and C waste.

Misinformation Threatens Viable Services – Michael H. Mobley, Chair, Southeast Compact Commission for Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management and retired Director of the Tennessee Division of Radiological Health bemoaned the fact that safe, efficient programs managing low-level radioactive waste can be undermined when documents filled with misinformation are circulated by anti-nuclear extremists and sensationalized by the news media. He described a recent situation in Tennessee where the widespread circulation of a report filled with mistruths led to bills in the legislature that had the potential to stop the use of all radioactive materials in the state.

Mr. Mobley urged fellow scientists to be aware of this practice and to counter it by providing factual information to the news media, legislature, and the general public.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Update – Larry W. Camper, Director, Division of Waste Management and Environmental Protection, provided an overview of six topics currently

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requiring NRC attention as follows: LLW Strategic Assessment; Class B/C Waste Disposal; Concentration Averaging; LLW Blending; Depleted Uranium and the Decommissioning Planning Rule. Mr. Camper cited the seven high priority assignments derived from the LLW Strategic Assessment and the ongoing efforts by the NRC staff to ensure that updated guidance for long term storage of Class B/C waste is in place prior to the near term closing of the Barnwell waste disposal to most of its current users. Mr. Camper pointed out that NEI/EPRI is developing guidance for nuclear power plants which the NRC hopes to endorse thru a Regulatory Information Summary (RIS) and the NRC guidance will focus on non reactor facilities such as universities and medical facilities which may face greater challenges given less space and proximity to the public at large.

Mr. Camper commented that there is an increased interest in down blending of LLW to reduce it to Class A waste and there has been some interest expressed by NEI in upblending which could conceivably create more Greater Than Class C (GTCC) waste. Mr. Camper commented that these are indeed interesting times in the LLW arena with many challenges facing the NRC and industry.

Disposal Capacity Update - Steve Creamer, President and CEO, *EnergySolutions*, gave statistics to illustrate that waste disposal volumes are decreasing and concluded that US generators are doing a better job managing their waste. Reviewing projections for waste volumes of various power plants, Mr. Creamer stated that approximately 130 million cubic feet of disposal capacity will be needed for decommissioning and 150-200 million cubic feet of capacity for Class A waste remains at the Clive, Utah facility, assuming no amendments to the license. He concluded that, given what is known today, there will be sufficient disposal capacity through decommissioning.

With regard to the Barnwell, South Carolina facility, Mr. Creamer said that Chem-Nuclear is working hard to reduce operating costs so that the facility can survive. Reduced operations will have a severe impact on the people of Barnwell County.

Facilities for NORM and TENORM Disposal - Scott Zoller, Radiation Safety Officer, Clean Harbors Environmental Services gave an update on services provided by its facilities in California and Colorado. A facility in Buttonwillow, CA, operating under a RCRA permit and a conditional use permit accepts NORM and TENORM waste. The Deer Trail facility near Last Chance, CO operates under a RCRA permit and is licensed for NORM/TENORM by the State of Colorado. It is also a limited regional disposal facility for the Rocky Mountain Compact. There are three court cases pending related to the Deer Trail facility.

Altered Operation of the Barnwell Facility - Kevin McCarthy, Connecticut Commissioner, Atlantic Compact Commission, explained that this is the final year for disposal of out-of-region waste at the Atlantic Compact facility in Barnwell, South Carolina. He questioned whether they can afford to operate the site with drastically reduced waste volumes and said the Compact Commission is exploring numerous options for operating on a break-even basis. Those options can be seen at www.atlanticcompact.org. Mr. McCarthy said that discussions are ongoing between *EnergySolutions* and utility generators as to how to raise revenues to break even on

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expenses. The South Carolina Budget and Control Board will consider closure of the facility if there is a deficit.

Attendance at Panel 11 was comparable to previous year's attendance (approximately 70 attendees), and many remained for the low-level radioactive waste paper session that immediately followed. The audience showed a keen interest in the topics discussed by the panel as evidenced by a lively question and answer session that followed the formal presentations regarding whether a crisis would occur with regard to a lack of disposal for Class B & C waste after July 2008.