

Expanding Outreach Efforts by Developing Community Advisory Councils - 12233

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INTRODUCTION

Nuclear energy generates significant reliable baseload electricity, yet many citizens in countries with nuclear power do not know the facts and benefits this clean energy source provides. For much of its history, the nuclear energy industry has been perceived as secretive and protective. Anti-nuclear activists use this general lack of public knowledge to sensationalize events, spread misinformation, and play on people's emotions. Yet, the nuclear energy industry has done little to combat these falsehoods imposed on the general public. Support for nuclear energy, or lack thereof, is even more pronounced after the extraordinary natural disasters and ensuing nuclear incident in Japan earlier this year, making proactive outreach to restore public trust even more important than before. The industry must inform and educate at all levels to dispel the falsehoods and enable clear, rational decision-making by government officials, business leaders and the general public, if it wants to grow and provide clean energy for the future.

BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST

Support from government officials, local business leaders and the general public is increasingly important as the nuclear industry seeks to continue operating existing plants or build new facilities. Within these groups are the often overlooked ethnic and minority communities. But these same communities are some of the fastest growing politically and socially active influences in the public sphere. Raising awareness and informing these various communities is a primary focus of AREVA's outreach activities and a key part of our sustainable development commitments.

In France, public outreach is conducted in part through Local Information Commissions. These government-mandated Commissions are sited near every nuclear facility in France and comprised of local government officials, non-government organizations, labor representatives, health professionals, and technical experts. In many cases, these representatives are professionals within the community with an influential, local voice. In the La Hague region near the AREVA used fuel recycling facility, a 36-member committee was established in 1981 to provide information to the public on the facility's activities and monitor any impact on the environment. Commission meetings occur three to four times per year and generate productive community interaction.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

In the United States, AREVA expanded upon this localized best practice and established a national Community Advisory Council. The members of the Community Advisory Council represent a variety of grassroots and minority organizations from across the United States who are active in various ways in local, state and federal arenas. AREVA Community Advisory Council members include the National Association of Neighborhoods, National Urban League, the League of Latin American Citizens, the Labor Council for Latin America Advancement, the

Center for Asian Pacific American Women, the International Institute for Indigenous Resources Management, and Earth Echo International, among others.

The objective for the Community Advisory Council is simple – listen to the members’ concerns, discuss their questions, and provide explanations and honest answers. Its purpose is not to promote AREVA, but to dialog with our stakeholders and raise awareness about the intrinsic link existing between energy, CO2 emissions, global warming, and economic growth, so these same people can make decisions when it comes to energy sources in the future. And they, in turn, can communicate and inform their constituents, neighbors, and friends resulting in expanded understanding and outreach. This was best demonstrated recently when AREVA asked several of its Council members to submit statements for the record to the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Energy Future. Five members actively engaged with written statements and three attended the public meeting and presented their statements. Had it not been for these five representatives from the African-American, Asian-American, Latin-American and Native-American communities, the ethnic minorities would have had no representation at the meeting. This showing demonstrated that ethnic and minority and communities have a vested interest in energy issues.



Fig 1. Ricardo Byrd from the National Association of Neighborhoods speaks at the Blue Ribbon commission hearing on behalf of recycling used nuclear fuel



Fig 2. Mervin Tano, President of IIRRM asks a question at the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s energy future

Through various outreach methods, AREVA provides information to demonstrate the synergies between renewable energy sources and nuclear energy because we understand and recognize

that there is not just one solution to meet our energy needs, in this country or around the world. The population needs a reliable energy mix in order to meet growing energy demands worldwide.

AREVA wants its CAC members to help us better understand their communities. This can only be done by listening to their concerns and answering their questions openly and honestly. This exchange is the only way to build constructive relationships without emotional bias.

This exchange also helps us address what is most important to our ethnic constituents. The Hispanic community in particular is concerned about cleaner air and the effects of greenhouse gasses on children and the elderly because they disproportionately suffer from asthma and asthma-related illnesses. Native Americans are concerned about the effects of uranium mining on their native lands and how they can mitigate health risks while taking advantage of the jobs the mines provide. By knowing what is important to these communities, we can focus our discussions and provide facts to address real concerns.

Another way AREVA provides education and promotes dialogue and discussion with various organizations is through speaking opportunities. We provided workshops and forums for Native Americans at the Council for Energy Resource Tribes national conferences, with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, for members of the League of Latin American Citizens, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators, and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, as well as the typical industry conferences, local civic clubs and chambers of commerce. These conferences have allowed us to talk about recycling used nuclear fuel to communities who may benefit from a local facility, about the education and skills needed for employment at a nuclear or renewable energy facility and about the number of jobs a clean energy infrastructure will bring to their communities.



Fig 3. Pre-dinner discussion with members of the LIC in France

Conferences and workshops provide an opportunity to reach a large audience, but these venues do not enable real discussion, only questions and answers within an allotted time. To help us engage our community stakeholders, we gather groups of 10 – 15 people for discussion around a particular topic. These “Dinner and Dialogue” sessions tend to generate a more lively debate and factual exchange.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Another program to achieve our outreach objectives and meet our corporate goals of transparency and honesty is our local stakeholder mapping and analysis program. This program identifies our stakeholders, develops ways to understand and engage with them, and

measures our progress. These stakeholder mappings are conducted near our primary facilities every two to three years.

Our methodology consists of interviewing AREVA employees to identify key external stakeholders – government entities, media, influential organizations, customers, etc. Once these stakeholders have been identified, they are asked a series of questions covering economic, societal, and environmental areas. Stakeholders are asked to be honest in their answers so that AREVA may better respond to their needs, answer their concerns, and find grounds for increased cooperation. Following an analysis of the results, an action plan is developed and implemented, so that when we return to these same stakeholders in three years, measurable improvements can be seen. If we already ranked at the top of stakeholders' evaluations, then actions are developed to ensure we remain at the top. This part of our community outreach helped identify important stakeholders who were not initially perceived to be such and to identify follow-up activities to help improve our key stakeholder relationships and our general outreach efforts.

One of the most effective ways to educate, allay fears, and demonstrate transparency is through tours and visits to our AREVA facilities. Every year, AREVA hosts over 10,000 visitors from around the globe to its industrial facilities in France. These facilities include the La Hague Used Fuel Recycling facility, the Chalon St. Marcel Heavy Equipment Manufacturing facility, and the Melox and Georges Besse fuel facilities.



Fig 4. Community Advisory Council members overlooking the spent fuel pool in the La Hague Recycling Facility

The Community Advisory Council members have participated in “Energy Tours” for several years, and have returned to their homes and jobs with a new perspective on nuclear energy. During the tours, visitors can see and experience our operations firsthand and participate in candid discussions with facility personnel and technical experts. One guest remarked at the conclusion of an Energy Tour that she left the United States hearing nuclear terminology that she did not understand, and will now return home not only with a better understanding of the nuclear fuel cycle, but better prepared to talk with friends and colleagues about the benefits of nuclear energy. Most tour participants particularly notice the attention these facilities place on safety and security.

In the United States, AREVA hosts over 2,500 visitors to our facilities in Lynchburg, VA, and Richland, WA. The Technical Training Center in Lynchburg is of particular interest as it has full-scale mock-ups, including a used fuel pool, allowing visitors to see the components inside the containment area without any concern for radiation. Visitors include not just Community Advisory Council members, but customers, school groups and government officials. Many times, school children will leave our facilities filled with excitement about the use of robotics in

our daily work, and customers leave with increased confidence in our safety controls and manufacturing processes.



Fig 5. Virginia State Senator Whipple visits the Technical Training Center

Media tours are also a very effective way to inform stakeholders. More than 100 journalists have visited our facilities resulting in over 400 articles and stories in newspapers and magazines. The blogosphere is also an important media venue. With the growing impact of blogging, Twitter, Wikipedia and other social media, electronic outreach has become almost more important than the regular channels of the past.



Fig 6. Local Lynchburg reporter watches mock-up fuel assembly move

Economic growth, energy security and climate change are key concerns for many of these groups. Most groups want to know how the nuclear renaissance will ensure long-term, good-paying jobs for their constituents. Predictions indicate that nuclear utilities will need to hire over 25,000 people to replace the 39% of the current retirement-eligible workforce by 2016. (*Nuclear Energy Insight, Insight Web Extra*) Visitors also want to know what type of education is needed in order to be eligible for these good-paying jobs. To help prepare for the workforce of the future, AREVA supports teacher workshops, internship programs and college career fairs. One such program in the Tri-Cities area in Washington State is the Hispanic Academic Achievers Program. This program encourages youth to pursue math, science, engineering and other professional careers that are historically poorly represented by women and minorities, and awards scholarships to college-bound students.

We are also partnering with Entergy and the Energy Solutions Foundation with the *Power Path to Energy* educational program. These materials consist of teacher lesson plans and student games providing factual information about nuclear and renewable energy sources.

CONCLUSION

AREVA understands that this community outreach and education are just the first steps toward helping clean energy sources grow. We know that energy demand and security means we need to utilize every clean energy source available. We must start the education process from pre-school age to encourage children to enter science, technology, engineering and math curriculums. We must maintain regular community dialog and open discussions and operate in a safe manner, because in the long run, it is these community members who will help ensure energy security for the country. These stakeholders have a strong voice, a voice that can be heard locally, and if necessary, a voice that can impact the future of nuclear energy worldwide.

As always, our industry is committed to the relentless pursuit of ever safer nuclear power. The nuclear industry as a whole must restore and win back trust. But the only way to restore this trust is by working together as an industry to engage in open discussion and dialogue. It is only by working together as an industry that we can ensure a safe, clean air future for generations to come, no matter where in the world we live.