
NEVADA NUCLEAR WASTE TASK FORCE, INCORPORATED

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My name is Judy Treichel. I am the Executive Director of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force. We maintain a full time office in the Alamo Executive Office Plaza at 4550 W. Oakey Blvd., Las Vegas, Nevada, with a local phone number, as well as a toll-free 800 number.

The Task Force is a non-profit organization, serving the State of Nevada by developing and implementing a program which promotes public participation in the U.S. Department of Energy's high-level nuclear waste program in Nevada. Our basic purpose is to promote an informed citizenry.

The Task Force activities must be performed in strict conformance with the provisions of a contract with Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects/ Nuclear Waste Project Office and related laws of the State of Nevada. Our operations are subject to audit of the State of Nevada, the U.S. Department of Energy, the Internal Revenue Service, and the U.S. General Accounting Office. We have been under contract to the State since February, 1988.

The vast majority of Nevadans are opposed to the siting of a high-level nuclear waste repository anywhere within the State. During the last sessions of the Nevada State Legislature, a law and two resolutions were passed opposed to or prohibiting the storage of high-level waste in Nevada. A great deal of pressure was put on legislators to pass those measures. In a major poll that was taken to determine citizen attitudes about the proposed facility, it was interesting to note that concerns about transportation were even stronger than about the repository itself.

I've given you an idea of what our office is and what we do. Now I want to talk about what people tell us.

We receive lots of requests for information about transportation. Most of the material we have is similar to what you've heard from some of the previous speakers. But when people talk to us, both before and after reading this information, they talk about their own experiences and "common sense" issues. As a matter of fact, many people feel that one of the few parts of the whole repository issue that they understand is highway transportation.

When people talk to us about accidents, they don't think in terms of rads, rems or technical probabilities. They talk about highly visible accidents with deadly danger that is invisible. They know that news in or near Las Vegas is big news nationally because it's interesting to the millions of tourists they rely on to vacation here.

Radiation is different from other hazards. Because it can't be seen, there are no immediate guarantees on the level of danger. People are skeptical about government standards for safe levels of radiation. They have even less confidence in the honest evaluation of an accident by the Department of Energy.

We are also told that federal indemnity of this program, or the Price Anderson Act, is not good enough. Comparisons are now being made to the S & L situation; for instance, if the people handling the material aren't responsible for their actions, will they be as worried about the danger? Wouldn't a serious accident be another huge taxpayer burden? If an accident ruins our tourism economy, does the government buy us a new industry?

When DOE tells folks here that most of the waste will come by rail, they don't take it seriously because, as you can see, there's no railroad track out here.

Another question we get is -- what if they get it out here and the mountain doesn't work the way it's supposed to? DOE's answer to this is, "That's why we have a system of retrievability." Certainly there's no doubt that the waste should be retrievable, but to the people concerned

about transportation, retrieving the waste just means additional and unanticipated transport.

I'm sure that today nobody has to tell you about highway travel in the Great Basin. You undoubtedly know that you didn't have a choice of routes to come here. When road hazards occur in other parts of the country, highway patrols reroute traffic. In many cases here, they stop travel.

In dealing with the people of Nevada we hear a lot of questions -- questions that are difficult, if not impossible to answer. In many cases their questions aren't for us to answer but to pass along to the decision makers.

These are intelligent, patriotic citizens who are offended when they are accused of not doing their duty on the waste issue. They know when they aren't told the truth.

We all get told to trust the experts. Well, when it comes to Nevada and the Great Basin, these folks have generational expertise. It's hard to believe that ten or even twenty years of study will give these new experts the answers necessary for thirty years of safe transportation and 10,000 years of successful high-level nuclear waste isolation in Nevada.