

PRESS RELEASE AND MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Donna Gilmore 949-204-7794 dgilmore@cox.net

30 years after Chernobyl, Department of Energy meets in Sacramento to discuss storage of hundreds of U.S. “Chernobyls” in a can

Over 2000 U.S. thin-walled canisters cannot be inspected, repaired, maintained, monitored, and some may already be cracking

April 25, 2016 (Sacramento, CA) The Department of Energy’s (DOE) nuclear waste “consent-based siting” Sacramento meeting on Tuesday, April 26th at 5 PM is also the 30-year anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster that released 10 tons of highly radioactive materials into the atmosphere that spread around the world. Similar deadly radiation is stored in each U.S. canisters.

The DOE’s Toxic Waste Agenda for California and the rest of the U.S.

The DOE plans to discuss criteria for obtaining consent from communities to transport and store hundreds of existing highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel canisters. Each thin-walled (1/2” to 5/8”) canister contains more deadly radioactive Cesium-137 than released from Chernobyl. What should be addressed first are the current problems with these thin-walled steel canisters. These canisters cannot be inspected, repaired, maintained and are subject to short-term stress corrosion cracking that can result in major radiation releases with no warning prior to the releases.

Manufacturing consent for solutions that don’t exist

The DOE and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have no current solutions to resolve these thin-walled canister issues and there will be no warning before these “Chernobyl” cans leak millions of curies of deadly radiation and potentially explode. These issues should be resolved before discussing “consent” to a consolidated waste storage facility.

The DOE history of choosing inferior toxic waste storage solutions

Other countries use thick-walled metal casks (10” to almost 20” thick) that do not have the thin-wall canister problems, yet the DOE and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) are ignoring the thick cask solution. The NRC and DOE need to raise their minimum requirements for storage of highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel waste. The DOE has a history of mismanagement and unresolved leaking of nuclear waste at DOE nuclear waste storage facilities such as Hanford in Washington and the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) in New Mexico. Their trail is full of broken promises to communities.

--- MORE ---

Over 2000 “Chernobyl” cans

There are over 2000 “Chernobyl” thin canisters stored in the U.S., including 111 in California (5 at Humboldt Bay, 21 at Rancho Seco in Sacramento County, 34 at Diablo Canyon in San Luis Obispo County, and 51 at San Onofre in San Diego County near the Orange county border).

Holtec’s Hellish history of failure

A 2-year old Holtec Diablo Canyon canister has all the conditions for corrosion and cracking from moisture and salts. No one knows if it is cracking, because there is no technology to inspect the surface or depth of cracks in thin welded canisters filled with spent nuclear fuel.

Once a crack starts, it continues to grow through the wall of the canister undetected until it leaks radiation. An NRC material engineer, Darrell Dunn, reported a Koeberg Nuclear Plant waste water tank leaked in only 17 years. It did not contain spent nuclear fuel. However, the tank had cracks deeper (0.61”) than the thickness (0.50”) of most U.S. canisters. The NRC considers the Koeberg tank comparable to the thin stainless steel thin-walled canisters used in California and most of the rest of the country. Holtec is one of the manufacturers of these canisters.

More canisters planned near San Onofre State Beach

In spite of all this, the NRC continues to approve use of these canisters when better options are available. The NRC plans to allow Southern California Edison (SCE) to install about 100 more thin-walled canisters near the San Onofre State Beach.

California Energy Commission ignores canister problems

Donna Gilmore presented the problems with the canisters at the 2015 California Energy Commission Nuclear Workshop. Robert Weisenmiller, Chairman of California Energy Commission, will be making the opening remarks at the DOE Sacramento meeting.

Coastal Commission issues license to pollute

The California Coastal Commission approved a permit for the San Onofre Holtec UMAX canister system with “special conditions” requiring SCE solve all the problems with the canisters **after** 20 years, which isn’t even possible. Watch video of NRC Mark Lombard admitting to the Coastal Commission that inspecting canisters “is not a now thing”. <http://youtu.be/QtFs9u5Z2CA>

Public Utility Commission approval of \$4.3 billion decommission plan may be imminent

The California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) will be voting soon as to whether to approve \$4.3 billion of ratepayer funds to decommission San Onofre and procure the inferior Holtec UMAX canister system. The Commission knows these canisters may fail prematurely based on testimony and filed briefs by Donna Gilmore, yet SCE has allocated no funds to address this.

CPUC Administrative Law Judge Maribeth Bushey in her proposed final decision stated “Donna Gilmore presented testimony and filed briefs on **meritorious** issues related to nuclear power”, but Bushey claims the issues “were outside the scope of this proceeding” and did not make “a substantial contribution to this decision as required by Pub. Util. Code § 1803.” However, cost issues are within the jurisdiction of the CPUC. The NRC only has jurisdiction over safety. SCE’s waste management assumptions and contingency plans were proven flawed.

--- MORE ---

Commissioner Florio stated at a past CPUC public meeting we should not have to buy these canisters more than once. He now has the evidence from this CPUC decommissioning proceeding to know we will likely need to replace canisters. There are no additional ratepayer decommission trust funds to replace canisters, so will this cost be born by the ratepayers? The Holtec warranty only covers the first 10 years of use.

Holtec President admits his storage solutions are fatally flawed

Holtec President and CEO Kris Singh stated at an SCE San Onofre Community Engagement Panel meeting that it is not feasible to repair canisters. He said that even if you could find cracks and in the face of millions of curies of radiation being released from even a microscopic crack, find a way robotically to repair them; this would just introduce another area for corrosion and cracking. <http://youtu.be/euaFZt0YPi4>

Canister vendors (Holtec and Areva) and SCE (Tom Palmisano) have proposed putting failed canisters into thick casks, but NRC Director Mark Lombard said no casks have been approved for this purpose and no vendor has even discussed submitting an application for this. Right now the only approved method of dealing with a failed canister or failing fuel is to put them back into a spent fuel pool, but the DOE is not including pools in their storage design and the NRC allows decommissioned plants to destroy spent fuel pools once they are empty, even though the spent nuclear fuel might remain at the current sites indefinitely. Rancho Seco and Humboldt Bay no longer have spent fuel pools. SCE plans to destroy San Onofre pools once empty, even though vulnerable "Chernobyl" canisters will remain at the Southern California beach.

Russian Doll nuclear waste containers are a flawed solution

The feasibility of using the Russian Doll approach of putting one leaking canister into another container does not solve the problem. The ability to load a leaking canister into another container has not been proven feasible or safe. The canister vendors need to prove to the NRC they can safely load leaking canisters into casks in the face of millions of curies of radiation and with thermally hot fuel that normally must have convection cooling in a vented concrete cask. Also, NRC regulations prevent transport of even partial cracked canisters.

"Chernobyl" cans will likely stay in California indefinitely

"The discussion at DOE "consent-based" meetings should be focused on these canister problems," says Mary Beth Brangan, Co-Director of EON, the Ecological Options Network. "Until those issues are resolved," says Brangan, "no one should or will consent to storing this nuclear waste."

Unfortunately, California and other states are now being forced to store hundreds of these "Chernobyl" cans indefinitely, with no plans in place to address radiation leaking and potential explosions.

April 26th DOE Consent-Based Siting Sacramento Meeting

5 PM, Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, 300 J Street, Sacramento. Meeting details and contacts at <http://www.energy.gov/ne/downloads/meeting-materials-consent-based-siting-public-meeting-sacramento-april-26-2016>

CONTACT: For more information or to arrange an interview with Donna Gilmore call 949-204-7794 or email dgilmore@cox.net or visit SanOnofreSafety.org

###30###