

Background on “Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors”

Three years ago, 150 safe energy groups across the U.S. signed onto “Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors.” The Principles called for safety and security upgrades – “hardened on-site storage,” or HOSS -- for irradiated nuclear fuel storage on-site at the reactors that generated the high-level radioactive waste in the first place. Such security upgrades are still currently needed as an urgent matter of national security, and also represent an interim alternative to such risky proposals as the Yucca Mountain, Nevada dumpsite, regional centralized interim storage, and reprocessing. Michele Boyd, now at Physicians for Social Responsibility, unveiled the Principles at a U.S. House of Representatives energy subcommittee hearing in September 2006.

We have now updated the Principles to reflect the Obama administration’s clear position that Yucca Mountain, Nevada is no longer an option for radioactive waste disposal. In response to the current push by the nuclear establishment to revive commercial reprocessing in the United States, we have also revised the Principles to emphasize that plutonium extraction from irradiated nuclear fuel would be extremely expensive for taxpayers, highly polluting wherever it is carried out, and a serious nuclear weapons proliferation threat. These revised Principles will serve as a valuable tool to push for needed security upgrades at on-site radioactive waste storage facilities, while pushing back against such dangerous proposals as reprocessing. They will be especially valuable for informing the “radioactive waste blue ribbon commission” being formed by Energy Secretary Steven Chu, with input from Congress.

Apart from the introductory paragraphs, the Principles remain identical to the 2006 version. If your group already signed the Principles in 2006, thank you. But please do sign again onto this updated and revised version now.

We look forward to working with you to steer U.S. radioactive waste management policy in safer and wiser directions than reprocessing. If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

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