



Daily Environment Report

Radioactive Waste: Texas Company to Seek License for First Private Interim High-Level Waste Storage

By Matthew Berger

Feb. 9 — A Texas-based company has told the Nuclear Regulatory Commission it intends to seek permission to build and operate an interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel.

Waste Control Specialists LLC filed the notice of intent Feb. 6, signaling that it will file an application for a license to store the high-level nuclear waste at its facility in Andrews, Texas, until the review and development of a permanent national repository is completed.

The interim facility could be operational within five years, Bill Lindquist, Waste Control Specialists' chief executive officer, said Feb. 9.

Initially, the facility would span 100 acres and accept spent fuel from Texas's two nuclear power plants, but Lindquist said there is plenty of room to expand on their 14,000-acre site, and they intend to seek spent fuel from decommissioned plants around the country.

"Some of you will scoff at our timeline," Lindquist told reporters in Washington, but he said the openness of the community to the project and the experience of his company would allow the process to move quickly.

Waste Control Specialists already treats and stores low-level radioactive waste at two other storage facilities on its Andrews site. A community meeting in Andrews resulted in a county resolution in support of the interim high-level storage facility Jan. 20.

The company intends to file a full license application with the NRC in April 2016 and hopes it will receive a license for the construction and operation of the interim facility by the summer of 2019, which could allow it to begin receiving shipments of waste by the end of summer 2020.

Lundquist said Waste Control Specialists would not seek any federal or state funding for the licensing application process or for construction.

Second Interim Application

NRC spokeswoman Maureen Conley confirmed to Bloomberg BNA that the agency had received the notice of intent from Waste Control Specialists and that the company intends to seek a 40-year license for its proposed facility.

Assuming the agency receives a "high-quality" application, she estimated it would take three years to review the application, though the process could take longer if objections are filed.

Conley said the only other application for an interim storage facility was approved in 2006. That facility was proposed by a coalition of utility companies under the name Private Fuel Storage LLC and the Skull Valley

Band of Goshute Indians

The license was issued with numerous conditions related to land use and transport corridors, and construction stalled as the project failed to meet those conditions and public opposition grew.

Construction never began on the proposed site, on Goshute Reservation land in Utah.

Officials with Waste Control Specialists emphasized Feb. 9 that they have the support of the Andrews County community for their interim high-level waste storage proposal as well as the existing low-level storage on the site, which began in 2012.

'Positive Step.'

The news of a possible interim storage facility was welcome news to National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, which has been pushing for a long-term storage solution for the spent nuclear fuel piling up at nuclear plants around the country.

"It's a positive step. We're glad to see someone willing to do this and step up," NARUC spokesman Rob Thormeyer told Bloomberg BNA, though he reiterated that he would like to see the NRC continue its progress in reviewing the proposed permanent nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nev.

The NRC found the Yucca Mountain site safe for storage in a report released Jan. 30, though many steps remain in its review of the licensing application for that permanent site (21 DEN A-12, 2/2/15).

In 2013, The U.S. Department of Energy proposed the creation of a new organization to construct and operate interim storage solutions for nuclear waste. That proposal sought a pilot interim facility by 2021, a full-scale interim one by 2025 and a permanent one, such as Yucca Mountain is proposed to become, by 2048.

WCS's Lindquist sees his company's new proposal as complementing both that proposed new organization and the Yucca Mountain licensing process.

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