



We need a better solution for nuclear waste (YDR opinion)

York Daily Record editorial

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Take our nuclear waste — please!

That twist on an old Henny Youngman joke is aimed at Chuck McDonald, spokesman for Waste Control Specialists in Texas.

In a recent [York Sunday News story](#) about spent fuel rods piling up at Peach Bottom Atomic Power Plant, Mr. McDonald said his company is seeking federal permission to transport and store high-level nuclear waste to its facility as an interim storage site until a permanent national waste facility is built.

Leaving aside for a moment the hazards of shipping nuke waste all the way from Peach Bottom to Texas, yeah, that sounds fine to us.

Just get it out of our backyard.

Maybe that's a NIMBY attitude, but that's the way it is and always has been with nuclear waste. Nobody wants it in their backyard. The stuff can stay dangerously radioactive for 10,000 years — longer than recorded human history.

NIMBYism is the reason we don't have a national storage site — as required by federal law. Nevadans don't want it at Yucca Mountain, and can you blame them? Would you want it at South Mountain?

But here's the irony: NIMBYism over a national storage site has led to nuke waste dumps in scores of communities across the nation.

This stuff is stuck in our backyards because there's no place else to put it.

Dangerously radioactive spent fuel rods are sitting at nearby Three Mile Island and Peach Bottom.

And, according to the Sunday News story, Peach Bottom could run out of space to store this waste in its pool and dry casks as soon as 2019.

That's just four years from now!

What are they going to do?

Exelon spokesman Dave Tillman said Friday that Peach Bottom is planning to build a new dry cask storage facility that would be able to hold spent fuel until the plant's current operating licenses for the two reactors expire in 2033 and 2034.

Few details were available about the project, but Mr. Tillman said a design has been drawn up and a vendor has been chosen. Construction could begin in 2017.

That's good because 2019.

Even if the new cask facility can hold waste well past 2034, though, it's not a long-term solution — such as a national repository.

And these casks might not even be a good short- or intermediate-term solution. A 2013 Nuclear Regulatory Commission report found some of the dry casks storing spent fuel rods at Peach Bottom could leak. The report cited water-damaged containers at the plant. Apparently, water was causing the outer portion of the casks' lid seals to corrode.

As we noted in an editorial at the time: If simple weather-related corrosion can cause problems after a few years, imagine what these casks might look like in 100 or 1,000 years.

Leaving them sit here along the Susquehanna is not acceptable.

So, yeah, take 'em, Texas. You can have 'em.

Assuming you don't have your own NIMBYs who will object.