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## **The Most Dangerous and Deadly Radioactive Waste Could Come Through Major Texas Cities and Be Dumped on West Texas**

### **Conservative Midland City Council Joins Growing List of Opponents 14 License Application Failures Detailed in Legal Filings**

*The Public Can Speak Out Until November 19th Against Plan to Dump the Most Dangerous of All Radioactive Waste in West Texas; Public Involvement Has Stopped Risky Waste Dumps Before*

Austin - The most dangerous radioactive waste in the nation may be dumped in West Texas if a license is granted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). This waste could be coming from more than 100 nuclear reactors around the country. The NRC is accepting public comments on this license until November 19<sup>th</sup>. Members of the public can send an editable letter from [www.NoNuclearWaste.org](http://www.NoNuclearWaste.org).

Waste Control Specialists (WCS) seeks to store 40,000 tons of irradiated reactor fuel rods at their existing low-level radioactive waste site for 40 years, although their application says that the waste could remain "until a permanent repository is found." In other words, we could get stuck with it forever, at inadequate site that isn't designed for the long-term. A de facto permanent disposal facility could be created for deadly waste that must remain isolated from people and the environment for literally a million years. Exposure to radiation can cause cancer, genetic damage and birth defects. Exposure to unshielded high-level radioactive waste is lethal.

On Tuesday, November 12, the conservative Midland City Council approved a resolution (6-0) opposing consolidated interim storage or permanent disposal of high-level radioactive waste in West Texas and New Mexico or the transportation of this radioactive waste through or around the corporate limits of the City of Midland.

"This entire licensing case has cost untold thousands of hours and dollars to grassroots groups, and all of it is unnecessary," said Terry J. Lodge, attorney for Public Citizen, SEED Coalition and four other organizations. "The Waste Control Specialists license application is not legally authorized. The NRC has no authority to review it. It would take an act of Congress for WCS (and the Holtec facility, which also has a pending license application) to allow it to ever be built. And it adds insult to injury for the unlawful WCS proposal to not include even bare minimum protections for their own workers, the public and the West Texas/Eastern New Mexico region. If there is a serious crack, breach, leak of a spent fuel canister somewhere along a 1500-mile railroad trip, or once radioactive waste gets to WCS, there is zero way to stop contamination without risking many lives. 'Irresponsible' doesn't begin to explain this multibillion dollar hoax." Fourteen major issues were addressed in the filings submitted to the NRC by the groups.

This deadly radioactive waste would be mainly shipped by rail, although barges and trucks may also be used. "Rail lines often run close to homes, schools, businesses and hospitals," said David Rosen, a concerned Midland resident. "Insurance policies generally don't cover radiological impacts. An accident with a radiation release could cause disaster, impacting our health and costing billions of dollars to remediate. It could threaten the market for oil produced in the Permian Basin, one of the world's most prolific sources of oil and gas. A decline in the production of oil and gas would affect the revenues coming in to Texas and New Mexico. Protecting the health, safety and economic well-being of Texans should take precedence over potential profits of a company that wants to bring in deadly nuclear reactor waste. The NRC should protect our health and safety and deny the license application."

"While the waste would not be in bomb grade form, a single train car would carry as much plutonium as was in the bomb dropped on Nagasaki," said Tom "Smitty" Smith, Special Projects Director for Public Citizen's Texas Office. "Radioactive waste moving through highly populated cities across the country could be targeted for sabotage by terrorists. An accident could catastrophe in major cities such as Houston, San Antonio, Dallas/Ft. Worth, El Paso or Midland. The waste would likely travel by rail alongside Highways I-10, I-20, I-30 and I-40 and then through the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex. Why should West Texas be targeted as ground zero for the nation's radioactive waste, which was created elsewhere? Other communities don't want to store the dangerous waste they created, but why should we take it?"

The state of Texas could get stuck with huge costs if there was a radiation release. A report by Dr. Marvin Resnikoff on the consequences of sabotage, found that cleanup costs could range from \$3.5 billion to \$45 billion if casks were penetrated, but not perforated. Transportation sabotage events in which the casks are fully perforated could result in cleanup costs of \$463 billion to \$648 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Opposition to the plan to dump on Texas keeps growing," said Karen Hadden, Executive Director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. "Resolutions against transport of dangerous radioactive waste were passed by Bexar, Dallas, Nueces, El Paso and Midland Counties and by the cities of Midland, San Antonio and Denton. When people learn about what the plan to dump nuclear reactor waste on Texas, they don't want it. Over 20,000 people have filed comments with the NRC rejecting this proposal. They want to protect the lives of their families."

"Federal regulations prohibit foreign ownership and control of WCS's partner is Orano, a company largely owned by the French government. Orano would have a 51% share of the joint venture, giving them a controlling interest. This violates Foreign Ownership and Control regulations designed to keep the U.S. secure. Countries may be allies today, but at odds in the future. Relations with France could become increasingly strained under the current Administration.

"This plan would especially impact minority communities. It's a major environmental justice issue," said Adrian Shelley, Director of Public Citizen's Texas Office. "In some areas within 1/2 mile of railroad tracks and switching yards, over 70% of the people are minorities. More than half of them speak Spanish at home and some don't speak English well. The NRC should make the license application available in Spanish so that people can read about the risky project which could endanger their families."

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<sup>1</sup> Potential Consequences of a Successful Sabotage Attack on a Spent Fuel Shipping Container: Updated Analysis Revised Final Version was prepared by Radioactive Waste management Associates (RWMA) for the State of Nevada, October 2008

“Public opposition to this plan can work. Texans have stopped 7 other proposals for high and low nuclear waste dumps over the last 40 years” said Diane D’Arrigo, Radioactive Waste Project Director for the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS)

“The first step in the least risky approach to dealing with high-level radioactive waste would be to stop making more. Waste that already exists should be stored in robust, hardened, monitored, inspected and repairable storage systems designed. These must be built and maintained to prevent leaks, and be stored at or as near as possible to the original reactor sites. Nuclear waste should not be moved until there is permanent place that can isolate it. The NRC claims that irradiated nuclear fuel can be kept onsite in dry storage for 60 years after reactors cease operating.” continued D’Arrigo.

The public can comment on the license application until November 19th. Comments on WCS/ISP’s Consolidated Interim Storage Facility should include Docket ID NRC-2016-0231, and be emailed to [WCS\\_CISF\\_EIS@nrc.gov](mailto:WCS_CISF_EIS@nrc.gov).

Comment letters can also be sent from [www.NoNuclearWaste.org](http://www.NoNuclearWaste.org)  
Or [www.nirs.org](http://www.nirs.org) (<https://bit.ly/2DDyGUo>)?