The Fallacy of Yucca Mountain

**Issue:** Dry Cask Storage of Nuclear Waste at Monticello as a short-term solution.

- What is short-term? Xcel’s short-term solution to nuclear waste is dry cask storage of nuclear waste at their Monticello Nuclear Power Plant. Although cask technology has not significantly changed in the last decade, Xcel is now stating that casks at Monticello will magically, safely store the waste for up to 200 years. The dry casks filled with nuclear waste at Xcel’s Prairie Island were said to be safe for only 25 years. This number for years of safe storage interestingly fit the projected date the DOE would begin accepting waste at Yucca Mountain at that time. What has changed? Why has dry cask technology suddenly become safe for 200 years?

**We need to re-define short term nuclear waste storage as indeterminate to potentially permanent nuclear waste storage.**

- Yucca Mountain is unsafe as a permanent geologic nuclear waste repository. Hundreds of technical issues remain unresolved including:
  1. Yucca Mountain is porous to water, which would cause erosion to nuclear waste containment packages.
  2. Yucca Mountain sits on a seismically active area; more than 600 earthquakes greater than a magnitude of 2.5 have been recorded at Yucca Mountain in the just the past two decades.
  3. Yucca Mountain sits on a volcanically active area; there have been three active volcanic eruptions within 50 kilometers of the Yucca Mountain site in the past 80,000 years.

**Yucca Mountain’s volcanic and earthquake potential alone restricts its use as a geologic or above-ground storage facility for nuclear waste.**

- In the wake of the 9/11, DOE has portrayed Yucca Mountain as a necessary national security measure. This is a national security myth.

**Yucca Mountain will contribute nothing to national security.**

Yucca Mountain will not be ready even to begin receiving spent fuel from reactor sites for a decade. DOE plans to ship 77,000 tons of high-level waste and spent fuel - the projects design capacity - in up to 98,000 shipments extending through 2046. Once there, the spent fuel will remain stored above ground at Yucca Mountain for up to 100 years while it cools. In the meantime, reactors (many operating on renewed licenses) will continue to generate at least 2000 additional tons of waste each year.

By 2046, even if (in the unlikely event) Yucca Mountain proceeds on schedule, there will be at least 77,000 tons of additional waste still stored at reactor sites, awaiting shipment to a supposed second repository. As the waste is removed, it will make room for an equivalent amount of newly generated waste that will take its place at various sites....In short, Yucca Mountain will change nothing.

*(p.7, Statement of Reasons Supporting the Governor of Nevada’s Notice of Disapproval of the Proposed Yucca Mountain Project, Kenny C. Guinn, Governor of Nevada, April 8, 2002)*
Yucca Mountain raises several questions for Minnesota’s continued reliance on Nuclear Power:

- Are we prepared as a state to continue using nuclear power to meet 20% of our state’s energy needs with its inherent nuclear waste, when this energy production can easily be replaced with the environmentally safe energy production of wind, solar, and bio-mass?

- Are we prepared to continue the siting of nuclear waste dry cask storage at reactor sites along the Mississippi River in view of the indeterminate length of time the nuclear waste will be stored there?

- How can we as a state plan for better, safer energy production while shouldering our responsibility for the nuclear waste within our midst?

- Yucca Mountain is an Environmental Justice Issue as it is within the boundaries of the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley with the Western Shoshone Nation. Do we support nuclear racism?

It’s going to be here for awhile. Think about it!

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